

PD-ABQ 048

96147

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**EDUCA
EVALUATION**

**USAID Contract #
OUT-HNE-I-801-94-0016-00**

Delivery Order # 801

Prepared for

USAID/Dominican Republic

December 1997

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Background

During the 1980s, the Dominican Republic, as did other countries in the Latin American region, witnessed a marked deterioration in host country education systems. The country started the 1980s with a low level of public sector investment in education (12.6 percent of central government expenditures in 1980) and, one decade later, had one of the lowest levels of public sector investment in education in the world (9.5 percent in 1990).¹

In late 1988 a group of Dominican businessmen concluded that, for the well-being of their businesses and the Dominican society, something needed to be done to raise public consciousness of the importance of education and to convince the government to pay more attention to the delivery of quality basic education services for all members of society. Together this small group decided that, if they were going to have a lasting impact, they had to move beyond their own self-interests (e.g., to train workers for their businesses and factories) and take action to address the structural problems inherent in the Dominican education system. This decision resulted in the creation of EDUCA—Acción Para La Educación Básica.

The founding members of EDUCA approached USAID and asked for funds to proceed with their plan. USAID—desirous of doing something in primary education but frustrated with its prior attempts to work through the government—decided to support the organization. In 1990 USAID awarded a seven-year, \$5,500,000 grant (later expanded to \$5,850,000) to EDUCA entitled, “Private Initiatives in Primary Education” (PIPE).

The PIPE project consisted of support to EDUCA in the areas of textbook development and distribution, training of directors and teachers in low-income public and private schools in Santo Domingo, and the design and implementation of an achievement testing and management information system. EDUCA also conducted several other activities that received either minimal or no support from USAID under the PIPE project: a massive social marketing campaign to raise the consciousness of the Dominican populace of the importance of supporting education in the advocacy for reform ((in the late 1980s and early 1990s) particularly in supporting the development of a ten-year educational plan and an educational reform law); a pilot non-formal preschool education program; and the preparation of a Dominican dictionary.

B. Evaluation Approach

This external evaluation—commissioned by USAID/Dominican Republic as USAID funding for EDUCA under the PIPE project comes to an end—focuses on how EDUCA was started, what it has accomplished over the past eight years, what challenges it has faced and

¹ World Bank. *World Development Report*, 1993.

currently faces, how external support from USAID has assisted it to accomplish its mission, and where it is headed. It sets EDUCA within a broader context—the economic, social, political, and educational situation in the Dominican Republic in 1990 when EDUCA was born, the evolution of this context over the past eight years, and its impact on EDUCA’s operations. The evaluation also presents how EDUCA has impacted on this context, especially on education.

The field work was carried out in June 1997 by a two-person team contracted through Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII). Over a four-week period Marcia Bernbaum and Uli Locher reviewed project documentation and interviewed some 70 individuals, including key informants in the Dominican public and private sectors. Locher also visited two schools and spent time both interviewing and observing EDUCA staff in action. In addition, the team contracted Julio Sanchez, an independent management consultant, to conduct focus groups with some 80 school directors, teachers, and parents.

The team returned to the Dominican Republic in July to provide a three-hour debriefing to EDUCA’s Executive Director, Board of Directors, and Advisors. The evaluation report was drafted in mid-September following another round of interviews with EDUCA’s recently named Executive Director and a subgroup of members of EDUCA’s Board and Advisors. A major focus of these interviews was to confirm EDUCA’s commitment to/progress in addressing the key evaluation recommendations presented in the July debriefing.

C. Evaluation Findings

EDUCA has done a lot of things “right” and has a great deal to justifiably be proud of:

1. Origins: (a) EDUCA was born out of APEC, an existing private sector organization that already had a track record of some 25 years of existence. (b) It was the initiative of a group of businesspeople who were determined that they would proceed under any circumstances. It would have been launched even if USAID had chosen not to fund it.

2. Image: (a) EDUCA is broadly seen as a non-partisan organization with no political ties or interests. For the Dominican Republic, which is very polarized, this is a major accomplishment. (b) By providing key services to the education community, especially in low-income areas, EDUCA has developed a positive image in key sectors of the Dominican population.

3. Strategic focus: (a) EDUCA has chosen to focus on the education system in general as opposed to just a small segment that might be within its own particular interest—private sector education. This focus has contributed significantly to EDUCA’s credibility. (b) With firmness and determination EDUCA has continued to make raising Dominican consciousness of the importance of supporting education a priority. In so doing, EDUCA has succeeded in “putting education on the Dominican national agenda.”

4. Composition: (a) EDUCA's Board of Directors is made up of a group of Dominicans that is deeply committed to education, project this image to the public at large, and enjoy a high level of credibility. (b) EDUCA continues to attract "new blood" to its Board of Directors. In the last two years EDUCA has incorporated several young, up-and-coming businesspeople into its board. (c) EDUCA has been able to attract several highly respected educators, academics, and others to serve in an advisory capacity to the board, and a number of prominent Dominicans from various walks of life (e.g., mass media, civil activists) would be delighted to assist EDUCA if asked. (d) Finally, in an effort to broaden its base, EDUCA recently established committees that are reaching out to the government, NGOs, the labor sector, and the private sector.

5. Operations: (a) EDUCA has served as a catalyst in forging linkages between educational institutions that might not have ordinarily associated with one another. Today, thanks to EDUCA, there are seven institutions who work closely together in designing teacher training programs. (b) Instead of developing its own in-house capability to deliver services, EDUCA has contracted with other institutions. In so doing, EDUCA has avoided the pitfalls of having a large administrative structure, helped strengthen other institutional capabilities, and developed valuable allies that it can tap upon for other efforts. (c) EDUCA has also collaborated closely with the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) in the implementation of their first loans. Through its grant from USAID, EDUCA provided technical assistance to the IDB in textbook development. It also collaborated with the Bank's expansion of the teacher training program initiated by EDUCA. (d) EDUCA has been successful in forging relations between public and private school directors and teachers, possibly an all-time first in the Dominican Republic. It is currently supporting an association of directors of Dominican schools who are graduates of EDUCA-financed courses. This association was recently formed at the initiative of the school directors. (e) In 1989/90 members of EDUCA mediated between the government and the teachers' union to bring a major teachers' strike to an end. They were successful in persuading the government to raise teachers' salaries, something which to this day the teachers' union and teachers in general have not forgotten. (f) EDUCA's Board of Directors has the capability to obtain resources, both through monetary and in-kind contributions. Few non-profit organizations in the Dominican Republic have this capability.

6. Implementation of the PIPE Project: (a) USAID support through PIPE permitted EDUCA to develop models of how things could work. Specifically, EDUCA has shown that textbooks of high quality *can* be produced in a short period of time and distributed at the beginning of the school year. EDUCA also has shown that the entire staff of a school, beginning with the director, *should* be trained. (b) EDUCA's support in the area of textbook development and distribution also received high marks. Ministry officials, school directors, and teachers universally commented on the high quality of the content of EDUCA books and materials.

(c) EDUCA received universal acclaim from school directors and teachers alike for the training they received under the PIPE program for several reasons: (i) It focused all of its activities (e.g.,

textbook development/distribution, director training, teacher training, achievement testing) around the implementation of the Plan Decenal and the pending Educational Reform Law; (ii) It decided to precede any training for teachers with substantial training for school directors, which paved the way for trained teachers returning to their schools to receive support from their directors; (iii) School directors that received training from EDUCA are implementing some new management procedures, have become promoters of the Reform, and are maintaining links and exchanges that are vital to the Reform; (iv) With support from EDUCA, directors have established an alumni association of over 500 directors (This organization could become a significant voice in pushing from the bottom up to assure the implementation of the Educational Reform Law); (v) Teachers who received training through PIPE are in general agreement that the training content was excellent both for upgrading the teachers' knowledge base and for modernizing their pedagogical skills; (vi) Teachers showed significant increases in knowledge and comprehension of the training materials between pre- and posttests conducted as an integral part of the teacher training; (vii) As suggested in qualitative reports on teacher performance, many teachers are employing a more participatory and stimulating instructional approach rather than teaching by rote.

EDUCA also has a number of challenges that it must address:

1. Members of EDUCA's board have diverging views on what EDUCA's mission should be.
2. EDUCA is currently not operating strategically.
3. EDUCA faces the reality that its "sure" source of funding from USAID will be terminating at the end of 1997.
4. Most individuals interviewed are looking toward EDUCA to play a key role in pulling together individuals from various walks of society, as it did when the Plan Decenal was designed, to assure its implementation; EDUCA staff are divided on whether and how to carry out this renewed advocacy role.
5. While those individuals in low-income areas who have benefited from EDUCA's services appreciate what EDUCA has provided, EDUCA is still seen as a somewhat elitist organization.
6. Some of the PIPE activities (e.g., achievement testing, management information system) were less successful and need to be rethought in terms of implications for future actions.

D. EDUCA's Future

EDUCA is at a crossroads. It has accomplished a great deal in its eight years of existence and has much in its favor. Times have changed, however, and it currently faces a number of challenges, some internal and others external.

— Since EDUCA began in 1989 there has been a clear upturn in the Dominican economy. There has also been a change in government. After 60 years of authoritarian rule a new President was sworn in a year ago August. While the Dominican populace is optimistic about its youthful President, today--over one year after the Fernandez government assumed power—civil society does not know where it stands with the government.

— There also have been changes in the education milieu. Relations between EDUCA and the Ministry of Education, which were excellent between 1991 and 1994 when Malagon was both Executive Director of EDUCA and Minister of Education, are not as positive, making working closely with the Ministry of Education more difficult. The new PLC government has made education a key priority and provides many visible signals of the importance it gives to education, making it less necessary for EDUCA to keep education high on the national agenda.

— The Educational Reform Law, based on the Plan Decenal that EDUCA supported in the early 1990s, was finally ratified by Congress in the Spring of 1997 with the strong support of President Fernandez. However, there is resistance within key sectors of the government to implementing this law, and the Plan Decenal, on which it was based, is now approximately five years out of date. Numerous interviewees during the evaluation highlighted the importance of both updating the Plan Decenal and taking action to assure that the Educational Reform Law is implemented.

During the interviews carried out with individuals from all walks of society the same two questions were asked: (a) Should EDUCA continue to exist (perhaps its "time" is over and it should dissolve); and (b) If the answer is that EDUCA should continue to exist, what should its key role(s) be?

With regard to the first question, every person interviewed opined that EDUCA should definitely continue to exist. When asked what role EDUCA should assume, the overwhelming majority indicated that EDUCA's long-term role should be advocacy for educational reform. They indicated that, in the immediate future, EDUCA should serve as a convener/facilitator in assuring that the recently approved educational reform law is implemented. A sizable number indicated that EDUCA should not cease its consciousness raising role; and a number referred to successful programs (e.g., teacher and director training, school adoption) that should be continued.

EDUCA is at a key juncture—it can choose to continue as a deliverer of services, much as it has been doing since the Plan Decenal went into effect, or it can pick up on the advocacy role it was playing before and during the time the Plan Decenal was being developed. EDUCA's trajectory—its image, organizational structure, and key functions—will vary depending on which role it decides to take on. The evaluation provides guidance for EDUCA on elements it should take into consideration depending on which direction it decides to take.

E. Recommendations

The evaluation provides recommendations for EDUCA, USAID, the Ministry of Education, and other donors. Highlights of these recommendations (listed in more detail in Section V of this report) are as follows:

1. For EDUCA

(a) EDUCA needs to decide whether it will assume primarily an advocacy or service delivery role. While the two are not mutually exclusive, each has differing implications for how EDUCA is structured and operates.

(b) EDUCA needs to update its mission and maintain a strategic planning mentality. Given the rapidly changing environment in the Dominican Republic, this should be something that EDUCA's Executive Director and the Board do on an ongoing basis, not just once a year at a retreat set aside for this purpose.

(c) Once EDUCA has developed its mission, the organization should consider whether the current structure of the Board and its Advisory Committee (Board membership limited to private businessmen; Advisory Committee composed of educators, academics, and others) makes the most sense.

(d) EDUCA should also determine what the roles and relationships should be between the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Advisory Committee. EDUCA also should develop a profile of the personnel that it needs and make adjustments accordingly.

(e) In recrafting its internal roles and relationships, EDUCA should familiarize itself with Board/Advisor/Executive Director relationships in other successful NGOs in the Dominican Republic. It should also seek the assistance of an outside individual/firm with experience in organizational development.

(f) EDUCA and its Board should assume a strong business mentality. It should have clear, and agreed upon, criteria for deciding when to take on (or not take on) new activities. These criteria should include whether the activity fits within EDUCA's mission and

whether the activity is cost effective, both for EDUCA and for education in the Dominican Republic in general.

(g) EDUCA should continue looking for “new blood” for the organization. A number of prominent Dominicans from a various walks of life—businesspeople and prominent individuals in mass media, the NGO/grassroots sector, and labor—would be delighted, if asked, to either serve on EDUCA’s board or in an advisory capacity.

(h) EDUCA should continue doing what it does well and what is within its administrative/managerial capacity. Now that EDUCA’s sure source of funding from USAID is coming to an end, it must be very careful not to launch into new activities without carefully considering whether they make sense given EDUCA’s mission and its capacity to manage and finance them.

(i) EDUCA should adopt strategies that have worked in the past when it takes decisions about which new activities it will take on. Successful strategies include contracting out to established educational institutions to design and implement both the directors’ and the teachers’ training programs, an action which obviated the need for EDUCA to develop the technical and administrative structures to carry out these activities. This approach also gained friends and supporters for EDUCA among these institutions.

(j) EDUCA should continue playing a catalytic role by commissioning studies that inform educational policy and bring to national attention themes that the government needs to address.

(k) Specific to the PIPE project, EDUCA should continue supporting the incipient association of directors that it nurtured. EDUCA also should support the teachers who have graduated from the EDUCA/PIPE project in two ways: by encouraging them to attend the yearly APRENDO conference; and by considering a suggestion made by several teachers to have EDUCA serve as a vehicle for publishing a newsletter through which graduates of the EDUCA/PIPE program can network and share experiences.

(l) EDUCA should not invest directly in continuing the achievement testing program. However, it may want to consider becoming a part of the national debate on issues related to achievement testing.

2. For USAID

(a) USAID should consider, as appropriate, reprogramming existing funds under the PIPE program to assist EDUCA as it embarks on its future. There is a small amount of funding left in the grant agreement with EDUCA under PIPE that is available for reprogramming.

(b) With EDUCA, USAID should consider taking steps to disseminate the EDUCA experience. The information obtained from this evaluation, especially the lessons learned, are highly relevant for other countries where there are businessmen who are interested in engaging in a similar endeavor.

3. For the Ministry of Education

(a) Building on the existing infrastructure developed by EDUCA, the Ministry of Education should consider arranging for financing to train directors of public and private schools throughout the country who have not yet benefited from the EDUCA-sponsored training.

(b) The Ministry of Education should also look for synergies between itself and EDUCA and look toward ways of forging its own strategic alliance with EDUCA. EDUCA has, in the past, had very successful collaborations with the Ministry of Education—in the design and delivery of textbooks, teacher training, and director training. Especially with the recent passage of the Educational Reform Law which encourages close linkages between the Ministry of Education and civil society, the Ministry of Education would benefit from reaching out to EDUCA to look at ways that both institutions can work closely together to improve the quality of basic education services in the Dominican Republic.

4. For other donors

(a) (This follows up on a recommendation above for the Ministry of Education.) Building on the existing infrastructure established with EDUCA funding, the World Bank, IDB, and European Community (who are jointly funding a major loan that was recently approved by Congress for the Ministry of Education) should provide financing to train public and private school directors throughout the country who have not yet benefited from the EDUCA sponsored training.

(b) Donors should also consider exploring mechanisms for entering into a strategic alliance with civil society to assure the best use of funds under the World Bank/IDB/European Union second loan. EDUCA has both the credibility and the capability to play a key role in forging this alliance.

As is indicated in Section VI of this report, EDUCA has already taken some important steps to start following up on these recommendations.

F. Lessons Learned

Readers interested in lessons learned from the EDUCA experience that might be applied more broadly are encouraged to refer to Section VII of the evaluation report.

I. CONTEXT

A. Background

During the 1980s the Dominican Republic, as did other countries in the Latin American region, witnessed a marked deterioration in host country education systems. A number of governments, who were already under-funding education, further reduced education funding in order to meet structural adjustment targets set by international donors. In the Dominican Republic the impact of structural adjustment was especially severe. The Dominican Republic started the 1980s with a low level of public sector investment in education (12.6 percent of central government expenditures in 1980) and, one decade later, had one of the lowest levels of public sector investment in education in the world (9.5 percent in 1990).^{1, 2}

For political and other reasons the Dominican government decided to take the “bite” out of the quality side of the equation. Funding for other than teachers’ salaries (which was already minimal) became nearly nonexistent. Teachers’ salaries, already low in the early 1980s, plummeted with inflation and reductions in government funding for education to less than \$100 per month, which was below the minimum wage and equivalent to the monthly salary for a domestic worker.

The impact on the education sector was devastating. While teachers continued to teach, as this was one job that was available, they were forced to look to other sources of employment in order to forge a basic livelihood. The education sector did not expand, which meant that the “market” took over and many groups, both small entrepreneurs and NGOs, started private schools in low-income areas. While private sector initiative in education is to be encouraged, many of these schools were started in desperate straits—with extremely limited facilities, teachers who weren’t qualified to teach, and in many instances a complete lack of texts and teaching materials. Ministry of Education oversight of these schools was nonexistent.

Over recent decades, one distinguishing feature of the Dominican Republic, in large part in response to a tradition of low level public sector investments in education, health, and other social sectors, is that it has an active and vibrant civil society. In 1989 Dominicans from all walks of life—ranging from philanthropists who formed NGOs, to religious groups, to community barrio groups—were busily helping to fill the void left by the public sector. Most were focused on service delivery; few were involved in trying to pressure the government to provide more support to the social sectors, in part because there was no tradition of having civil society play this role.

¹ World Bank. *World Development Report*, 1993.

² From 1978-1986 the PRD party was in power. From 1986 to 1996 the PRSC party was in power. While both underfunded education, the PRSC party under Balaguer is said to have deliberately reduced funding levels, especially for basic education.

In late 1988 a group of businessmen came to the conclusion that, for the well-being of their businesses and for Dominican society in general, something needed to be done to raise public consciousness of the importance of education and convince the government to pay more attention to the delivery of quality basic education services for all members of society. Their workers could not read and write, and their country was not going to be competitive with the Asian Tigers (who decided starting in the 1960s to invest heavily in basic education) if something wasn't done to improve basic education. At the time that they made the decision to focus on basic education, one of their members was the Minister of Education.

Together this small group decided that, if they were going to have a lasting impact, they had to go beyond their own self-interests (e.g., training workers for their businesses and factories) and take action to address the structural problems inherent in the Dominican education system. These included: a long history of drastically under-funding education, which had become exacerbated during the 1980s; demoralized teachers whose salaries were desperately under-funded; a lack of quality control over either public or private sector education; low-quality teacher training; an absence of any program to train primary school directors; few to no textbooks for either public or private schools; and—perhaps most serious—a general lack of appreciation among the Dominican populace in general of the importance of education as both a social and economic investment in their and their country's future.

The founding members of EDUCA approached USAID and asked for funds to proceed with their plan. USAID—desirous of doing something in primary education but frustrated with its prior attempts to work through the government—decided to support EDUCA. In 1990 USAID signed a seven-year, \$5,500,000 grant (later expanded to \$5,850,000) with EDUCA entitled, "Private Initiatives in Primary Education (PIPE)."

B. Evaluation Methodology

This external evaluation—commissioned by USAID/Dominican Republic as USAID funding for EDUCA under the PIPE project comes to an end—focuses on EDUCA: how it got started, what it has accomplished over the past eight years, what challenges it has faced and currently faces, how external support from USAID has assisted it to accomplish its mission, and where it is headed.

The evaluation sets EDUCA within a broader context—the economic, social, political, and educational situation in the Dominican Republic in 1989 when EDUCA was born (addressed above), the evolution of this context over the past eight years and its impact on EDUCA's operations, and the impact of EDUCA on this context, especially on education.

The field work for the evaluation was carried out in June 1997 by a two-person team contracted through Creative Associates International, Inc.:

- Team Leader Marcia Bernbaum, a retired USAID employee who spent the majority of her 20-year career in USAID focusing on education and specifically on building indigenous capacities in Latin America to advocate for reform in the education sector. She focused on the “bigger picture” aspects of the evaluation—specifically how EDUCA was viewed by broader segments of Dominican society, what their future expectations were for EDUCA, and the role EDUCA played in policy reform and consciousness raising.
- Uli Locher, Professor of Sociology at McGill University with extensive experience in evaluating education programs and a specialty in the Caribbean. Locher focused on EDUCA’s effectiveness in implementing the PIPE project. PIPE assisted EDUCA to build its institutional capacity and implement training programs for primary school directors and teachers, initiate an achievement testing system, and install an internal management information system.

Over a four-week period the evaluation team reviewed project documentation and interviewed some 70 individuals, including key informants in the Dominican public and private sectors. Locher also visited two schools and spent time both interviewing and observing EDUCA staff in action. In addition, the team contracted Julio Sanchez, an independent management consultant, to conduct five focus group sessions with school directors, teachers, and parents (see Annex A).

Prior to departing the Dominican Republic in late June, Bernbaum and Locher did two debriefings—one for USAID (the USAID Mission Director, Deputy Director, and SO team staff) and one for key EDUCA staff (President of the Board, Acting Executive Director). In mid-July Bernbaum and Locher returned to the Dominican Republic to debrief EDUCA’s Board and its advisors. A major focus of the three-hour debriefing was on recommendations for EDUCA’s future. Bernbaum also interviewed World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) staff in Washington, DC who backstop education in the Dominican Republic.

The evaluation report was drafted in mid-September following another round of interviews with EDUCA’s recently named Executive Director and a subgroup of members of EDUCA’s Board and Advisors. A major focus of these interviews was to ascertain EDUCA’s commitment to/progress in addressing the key evaluation recommendations presented in the July debriefing.

C. Structure of This Report

This report is drafted with four audiences in mind: USAID, who wants to know whether its investment over an eight-year period was worthwhile and what lessons were learned that could be useful for other USAID missions; EDUCA, who with the termination of USAID funding and changes in the political, economic, and educational context since its inception, faces new challenges for the future and explicitly has asked for guidance on next steps; the World Bank and the IDB, who are key donors in the education sector in the Dominican Republic and who, together with the Dominican Ministry of Education, are preparing to implement a major education loan that is based on the recently passed education reform that EDUCA helped to promulgate; and the Dominican education sector, to include the Ministry of Education and key educational institutions, that played a key role in implementing portions of EDUCA's activities that were financed with USAID funding.

The report is divided into seven sections. Section II provides the reader with a brief background and history on EDUCA: its organization, structure, and operations; and its activities to date in the areas of social marketing, advocacy, and service delivery, including the services financed by USAID under the PIPE project. In Section III the evaluators comment on EDUCA's effectiveness to date in carrying out its mission and in achieving PIPE objectives. It summarizes what EDUCA has done "right" and areas of weakness where it needs to improve its operations. Section IV addresses EDUCA's future. It starts by examining the current political, economic, social, and educational context and then moves to a consideration of future options for EDUCA. Recommendations for key audiences—EDUCA, USAID, the Dominican Ministry of Education, and other donors—are provided in Section V. Section VI provides a short update on progress made by the Board and Executive Director in implementing the evaluation recommendations subsequent to the July debriefing. The final section of this report (Section VII) lists lessons learned from the EDUCA experience for other countries where the business sector either currently is or wishes to become actively involved in supporting the improvement of quality education.

Annexed to the report, in addition to the "usual" annexes listing interviews carried out and documents consulted, is the team's in-depth evaluation of the PIPE project—the adequacy of its design, the extent to which PIPE met its objectives, and the adequacy of the roles of the key actors involved in implementing the project.

II. EDUCA: 1990 - 1997

A. EDUCA's Organization and Structure

When EDUCA was formed in 1990 it was established as a private, non-profit organization headed by a nine-member board, all from the Dominican private sector and supported by an Executive Director. In addition, the Board decided to reach out to highly regarded individuals in Dominican society—primarily educators and academics—to serve in an advisory capacity to the board. Jacqueline Malagon, the Director of APEC (the mother organization that spawned EDUCA) assumed the role of Executive Director while maintaining her role as Executive Director of APEC. EDUCA, with funding under the USAID PIPE project, recruited and hired a Project Manager for the PIPE project, Aida Consuelo Hernandez. Hernandez, in turn, hired a group of 10 individuals (three senior staff, three junior staff, two assistants, and two support personnel) to staff EDUCA's operating structure.

In 1991, when Jacqueline Malagon was named by the President to be Minister of Education she maintained her EDUCA and APEC Executive Director hats. What followed during the next three years of her tenure as Minister of Education was a unique relationship between the Ministry of Education and EDUCA: EDUCA was given a major entrée into the Ministry, and members of its board and advisory group were called upon on numerous occasions to provide advice to the Minister and her staff. EDUCA gained a high level of visibility within education circles and the reputation for helping improve the lot of education. The Ministry of Education for its part gained individuals from the Dominican private sector that it could count on for support.

At the time of the external evaluation, EDUCA was functioning with an nine-member board and a group of 16 advisors. Malagon had stepped down six months before and the Executive Director slot was vacant. Hernandez played this role de facto but without the authority she needed to take decisions.

B. EDUCA's Activities to Date

Since it was established in 1990 EDUCA has been active in a variety of areas, with funding through USAID and other sources. With USAID funding, EDUCA conducted four major activities: produced and distributed textbooks to low-income schools in Santo Domingo; provided training to directors and teachers of low-income schools in Santo Domingo; established an achievement testing system to gauge the performance of schools and students directly benefiting from USAID project inputs; and established a management information system to track project schools and serve as a model for the Ministry of Education.

In addition, EDUCA conducted other activities that were supported to some extent by USAID funding but were financed primarily with its own funding and in-kind donations. EDUCA promoted a mass media social mobilization campaign to raise national

consciousness of the importance of education and actively advocated for educational reform, playing a pivotal role in resolving a major teachers strike in 1990 and increasing funding for teachers. EDUCA also was instrumental in promoting the Plan Decenal de Education, the first successful effort in the Dominican Republic to mobilize a large cross section of the Dominican population in support of a ten-year plan for reforming the Dominican Republic's education system.

Several service activities were funded directly by EDUCA without USAID funding: a school adoption program in which EDUCA involved private firms and business groups in supporting individual schools; a program to develop a Dominican dictionary for use in schools throughout the country; and—with the Peace Corps—a pilot non-formal early childhood education program and the development and distribution of materials for teachers and communities on community participation in schools.

The remainder of this section describes the activities that were the focus of this evaluation—textbook production, teacher and director training, achievement testing, management information systems, other service activities, consciousness raising, and advocacy. For each focus area, the evaluators considered both the nature of the activity and accomplishments at the time this evaluation was carried out. Comments on the quality and relevance of EDUCA's role in these areas and in general are reserved for the next section. A description of the activities financed by USAID under the PIPE project, together with an evaluation assessment of the impacts of the activities, weaknesses, and outstanding issues are described in more depth in Annex A. Time limitations made it impossible for the evaluators to do more than note other EDUCA-supported activities—the EDUCA's school adoption program, the Dominican dictionary, and activities with the Peace Corps in non-formal early childhood education and community involvement in schools.

1. Design and distribution of textbooks

EDUCA contributed to implementing the Plan Decenal on a national scale by commissioning the preparation of new Mathematics and Spanish textbooks and workbooks that were subsequently distributed throughout Ministry of Education schools. Over a three-year period, 150,444 textbooks, 1,517 dictionaries, and 6,020 encyclopedias were produced and distributed to 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 8th grade students in low-income schools in Santo Domingo, exceeding targets agreed upon between EDUCA and USAID. EDUCA educational materials advisors also provided assistance to the IDB in designing additional textbooks and educational materials that were reproduced and distributed under a major IDB loan in the early 1990s.

2. Training of school directors

EDUCA made it possible for 811 school directors in low-income areas of Santo Domingo (approximately 10 percent of all primary school directors in the Dominican Republic and 50 percent of the directors in the national district) to receive training. The training,

slightly exceeding project targets, was contracted out to three higher education institutions: the Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC), the Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña (UNPHU), and the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD). In selecting schools from which to draw directors for training EDUCA avoided private business enterprises, which are schools only by name, and, using thirteen stringent criteria, selected schools in low-income areas of Santo Domingo where upgrading could lead to permanent improvements and conformity with the standards of the Plan Decenal.

The program lasted two years (two summers and the following academic years) and provided instruction in all aspects of school management as well as an introduction to the pedagogical renewal contained in the Plan Decenal. The monthly follow-ups during the academic years have permitted a sustained exchange of experiences and the emergence of support networks among the school directors, who came from public and private schools.

An important, and unanticipated, outcome of this program has been the emergence, under EDUCA's guidance, of two groups—an Association of Alumni of the directors training program; and a Multiple Services Cooperative of Private Schools.

3. Teacher training

EDUCA made it possible for 10 percent of the nation's teachers to receive training. Under a teacher training component of the Ministry of Education, World Bank, and IDB programs, USAID/PIPE financed training for 3,113 private sector non-certified teachers. As part of the World Bank/IDB programs, 891 certified teachers received long-term training and 4,448 received short-term training in two of ten training institutions,³ slightly exceeding targets set out in the USAID/EDUCA project agreement. Follow-up has been limited to inviting teachers to the annual APRENDO conference.

As with the director's training program, training consisted of two summers, where students attended classes full-time, and two school years, where students attended classes on Saturdays. The curriculum was common to all training institutions. Several of the training institutions made it possible for students studying under these programs to obtain equivalencies that they could then apply toward a regular university degree.

4. Achievement testing

With USAID assistance under the PIPE project, EDUCA contracted out to a local firm, ASISA, to design, test, and administer achievement tests in schools benefiting from the inputs (textbooks, and director and teacher training) provided under the PIPE project. Over the life of the project 87,450 tests were administered and reported on (this number exceeded

³ EDUCA financed training programs in the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD) and the Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC).

project benchmarks of 70,000 tests). Mean achievements by school (enormous differences), sex (virtually no difference), age (negative correlation), and school type (private schools seem to outperform public schools) were reported to EDUCA.

Standardized achievement tests had been part of the Plan Decenal from the beginning, but like so many other parts of the Plan were slow to be implemented. The expertise accumulated by EDUCA was instrumental in improving the Ministry of Education's national testing program through advice on content and methodology as well as through training of Ministry of Education personnel.

5. Management information system

The PIPE Project Paper provided for the installation in EDUCA of a complete, flexible management information system (MIS) supplying the data EDUCA staff needed for decision making on a daily basis. The MIS had three roles: (a) assist in carrying out significant research work; (b) assist in selecting EDUCA activities as well as targeting service delivery; and (c) foster two-way data exchanges between EDUCA and the Ministry of Education's MIS. A network of Apple computers was purchased and later replaced by Windows-based machines. Two EDUCA staff were hired and trained in the use of the MIS.

6. Consciousness raising of the importance of basic education

With a small amount of USAID funding, but primarily with its own money and in-kind donations, EDUCA launched a massive social marketing campaign to promote two ideas throughout the Dominican Republic: the importance of parents sending their children to school; and the importance of businesses supporting basic education. Full-page ads and supplements appeared in newspapers urging parents to send their children to school. Messages conveying the importance of education (with EDUCA's "seal" behind it) appeared on plastic grocery bags in supermarkets. Finally, two massive media campaigns (one entitled, "Education, a National Obsession," and another entitled, "To Educate Is to Teach to Live Better") were conducted.

In addition, EDUCA began hosting yearly APRENDO conferences where it has brought together educators and others interested in education at the beginning of each school year. Over 1,000 school teachers, educators, and other interested parties paid to attend the 1996 APRENDO conference held in Santo Domingo in late October 1996. Another 340 paid to attend a parallel APRENDO conference in Santiago. The third APRENDO conference took place in late October 1997.

In close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, EDUCA also has carried out three back-to-school campaigns entitled, "La Alegria de la Escuela." These campaigns involved a "full court press," where radio, television, news media, parades, and other

activities were used to motivate children and parents to prepare for the new school year each September.

7. Advocacy for reform

a. Early support for resolving impasse between teachers and the Ministry of Education.

EDUCA has played an important role in advocacy for reform. In 1989 the founding members of EDUCA joined forces with the key teachers' union (the ADP), academia, and other civil society organizations to publish a manifesto indicating their deep concern about the status of education, and particularly primary education, in the Dominican Republic. President Balaguer responded by naming a commission composed of a group of distinguished educators and businessmen to carry out an in-depth review and come up with recommendations for improving education in the Dominican Republic.

The commission submitted to the President a series of strong recommendations that included, among others, taking steps to progressively increase teachers' salaries and do a re-haul of the Ministry of Education. The President responded by naming Jacqueline Malagon as Minister of Education and empowered her to make sweeping changes in the Ministry. He also took the first of what was to be four steps during the remaining years of his term as President to increase teachers' salaries.

At this time, a most interesting alliance between the Dominican business sector and the key Dominican teachers' union—perhaps the only of its kind—was born. This alliance, which has served to push the government to take needed reforms, exists to this day and has, on a number of occasions, been decisive in permitting key reform steps to take place.

b. Support for the Plan Decenal

Also in 1989 EDUCA became involved in a movement spearheaded by "Plan Educativo," a group of highly respected academics and several businessmen from the province of Herrera. In the late 1980s Plan Educativo had conducted some thoughtful studies on the status of the education system and advanced recommendations for improving the system. In 1990 Plan Educativo joined forces with EDUCA and the Ministry of Education to take this concern to a national level. Members of EDUCA and the Ministry of Education participated in the Dominican delegation to the Jomtien Education for All Conference in 1990 where they were encouraged, along with other delegations, to mobilize civil society to develop 10-year plans to improve access to, the quality of, and relevance of primary education in their countries.

The group returned to the Dominican Republic further invigorated and redoubled their efforts to carry out a broad consultation with the Dominican populace in

order to arrive at a ten-year plan. This process, which was conducted between October 1990 and December 1992, involved consulting with some 60,000 citizens from all walks of life in the Dominican Republic—from high level academics to teachers and school directors, parents, business groups, religious groups, and low-income barrio groups. Particularly significant (and a great source of pride to Dominicans from all walks of life) was that this was the first (and to this writer's knowledge only successful) effort to date to mobilize a broad cross-section of Dominican society and actually achieve their coming to agreement on key themes.

This process resulted in 1992 in a "Plan Decenal" that recommended a major overhaul in the Dominican Education system. The proposed overhaul included significant decentralization of services and decision making, a more active, learner-focused form of learning, a dramatic increase in funding for education, massive training of education personnel, and the provision of relevant, high quality texts for all students.

The Plan Decenal was presented to donors at the Consultative Meeting for the Dominican Republic held in Paris in July 1993. It resulted in a commitment from key donors (the World Bank, the IDB, and the European Union) to provide major funding for education in the Dominican Republic if the key reforms proposed in the Plan Decenal were passed.

EDUCA was active in this process in a variety of ways: opening doors to get influential members of civil society involved; seeking out financing for the diagnostic process, some of the mobilization activities, and the editing and printing of documents; organizing fora with influential people to discuss educational issues and implications of key recommendations under consideration; obtaining mass media coverage for the Plan Decenal activities; and incorporating the key elements of the Plan Decenal in all of its educational activities (e.g., director and teacher training, development of textbooks, etc.).

8. Other service activities not included in this evaluation

EDUCA, with its own funds, launched a school adoption program that has gained the organization a high level of visibility with both school personnel and parents where the schools are located and the public in general. EDUCA was working with dozens of companies and private sector groups (such as Rotary Clubs) that have adopted 127 individual schools at the time the evaluation was carried out. Depending on the relationship between the organization and the school and the schools' needs, assistance has come in the form of such support as classroom renovation, school supplies, and student scholarships. In many instances these relationships have continued over a multi-year period.

With the assistance of Peace Corps Volunteers and the Ministry of Education, EDUCA recently initiated a pilot non-formal pre-school program that is being carried out in the local communities of two suburbs of Santo Domingo: Haina and Los Alcarrizos. This program, which is reaching 600 children ages 3 to 5, has three objectives: (a) raise consciousness

among families concerning the role of parents in the educational development of their children; (b) integrate the community in the development of the pre-school center in their neighborhood; and (c) provide adequate conditions, which allow the facilitator to help students develop age-appropriate basic motor, social, conceptual, and communications skills.

Finally, EDUCA is putting the final touches on a program to develop a Dominican Dictionary for use in schools throughout the country. Publication and distribution of the dictionary are planned for late 1998.

III. AN ASSESSMENT OF EDUCA'S EFFECTIVENESS

During the interviews carried out with individuals from a wide gamut of Dominican society the evaluators asked what EDUCA had "done right," what it could have done better, whether EDUCA had reason to continue existing, and if it did, what EDUCA's role should be. In addition, over 80 primary school directors and teachers supported under EDUCA/PIPE were interviewed in five focus group sessions and asked the same questions.

This section summarizes what these individuals collectively had to say in response to the first two questions. Evaluators' perspectives also are included.

A. What EDUCA Has "Done Right"

EDUCA has done a lot of things "right" and has a great deal to justifiably be proud of. EDUCA would be well advised to reflect on and build into its future plans what it has done "right" as it defines its future role (see Section IV below). Businessmen and organizations of businessmen in other countries would also be well advised to take these elements into consideration, where appropriate, in designing programs with similar aims. For the readers' convenience, these things are organized into six categories: origins, image, strategic focus, composition, operations, and implementation of the PIPE project.

1. Origins

- *EDUCA was born out of APEC,⁴ an existing private sector organization that already had a track record of some 25 years of existence.* EDUCA members, therefore had a model to follow and prior experience to build on when they set out to establish their new organization.
- *EDUCA was the initiative of a group of businessmen who were determined that they would proceed under any circumstances.* It would have been launched even if USAID had chosen not to fund it.

⁴ Accion Pro-Educacion y Cultura (APEC) is a non-profit association founded in 1964 by a group of distinguished Dominican businessmen. With time APEC has developed into a consortium of five educational institutions responding to national needs: APEC University, APEC Student Loans Foundation (FUNDAPEC), APEC Distant Education Centers (CENAPEC), APEC Sexual Education Institute (INSAPEC), and APEC Institute for the Promotion of Women (PROMAPEC).

2. Image

- ***EDUCA is broadly seen as a non-partisan organization with no political ties or interests.*** For the Dominican Republic, which is very polarized, this is a major accomplishment.
- ***By providing key services to the education community, especially in low-income areas,⁵ EDUCA has developed a positive image in key sectors⁶ of the Dominican population.*** The school directors and teachers that have benefited from EDUCA's services speak very positively of the services they have received and hold EDUCA in high esteem.

3. Strategic focus

- ***EDUCA has chosen to focus on the education system in general as opposed to just a small segment that might be within its own particular interest—private sector education.*** In particular, EDUCA has focused on improving the quality of education that is delivered to children in low-income areas of Santo Domingo. This has done a great deal to bolster its credibility.
- ***With firmness and determination EDUCA has continued to make raising the consciousness of Dominicans of the importance of supporting education a priority.*** One common theme that emerged during the evaluation interviews was that EDUCA—through its consciousness raising and its advocacy activities (see below)—has succeeded in “putting education on the Dominican national agenda.”

4. Composition

- ***EDUCA's Board of Directors is made up of a group of Dominican businessmen who enjoy a high level of credibility.*** Members of the Board are deeply committed to education and project this image to the public at large.
- ***EDUCA continues to attract “new blood” to its Board of Directors.*** In the last two years, EDUCA has incorporated several

⁵ Training of teachers and directors; school adoption program.

⁶ Teachers, directors, and parents in low-income communities served by EDUCA.

young, up-and-coming businessmen onto its board. These individuals are very enthusiastic EDUCA supporters.

- ***EDUCA has been able to attract several highly respected educators, academics, and others to serve in an advisory capacity to the board.*** In addition, a number of prominent Dominicans from various walks of life (e.g., mass media, civil activists) indicated during the interviews that they would be delighted to assist EDUCA if asked.
- ***EDUCA is beginning to take steps to broaden its base.*** Last January during an annual retreat, EDUCA staff decided to start shedding its image of being an association of elite businessmen. It now has committees that are reaching out to the government, NGOs, the labor sector, and the private sector. While EDUCA has a way to go in this area (see Section V, Recommendations), this is a promising start.

5. Operations

- ***EDUCA has served as a catalyst in forging linkages between educational institutions that might not have ordinarily associated with one another.*** EDUCA made the deliberate decision to get bids from a variety of higher education institutions to provide teacher training under the PIPE project. Today, thanks to EDUCA's impetus, there are seven institutions who work closely together in designing and delivering teacher training programs,
- ***Instead of developing its own in-house capability to deliver services, EDUCA has contracted with other institutions.*** EDUCA has accomplished several things in doing this: (a) avoided the pitfalls of having a large administrative structure; (b) served an important role in strengthening other institutional capabilities that will serve beyond the tenure of EDUCA's support for them; and (c) developed valuable allies that it can tap upon for other efforts. This is the case in the areas of teacher training, director training, the design and reproduction of textbooks, and achievement testing.
- ***EDUCA collaborated closely with the World Bank and the IDB in the implementation of their first loans.*** EDUCA provided (through its grant from USAID) technical assistance to the IDB in textbook development; it also collaborated with the Bank during

the expansion of the teacher training program initiated by EDUCA. Both the World Bank and the IDB appreciate this collaboration.

- ***EDUCA has been successful in forging relations between public and private school directors and teachers, possibly an all-time first in the Dominican Republic.*** As this evaluation is being drafted, an association of directors of Dominican schools who are graduates of EDUCA-financed courses is being formed at the initiative of the school directors. This association is composed of public and private school teachers. During the focus group sessions carried out for the evaluation, several teachers and directors pointed out that, for the first time, the barrier between public and private schools had been broken.
- ***EDUCA has the track record of having successfully served as a mediator, and in so doing has established credibility with key sectors of society.*** In 1989/90, when EDUCA was in the process of being formed, group members mediated between the government and the teachers' union to bring a major teachers' strike to an end. They were successful in persuading the government to raise teachers' salaries, something which to this day the teachers' union and teachers in general have not forgotten.
- ***EDUCA's Board of Directors has the capability to obtain resources, both through monetary contributions and in-kind contributions.*** EDUCA obtains approximately 150,000 pesos a month or a little over \$10,000 through a combination of dues and a variety of fund raising events). EDUCA has been able to obtain assistance without charge from the media to both prepare and air spots about EDUCA and the importance of education for all in newspapers and on television and radio). Not many non-profit organizations in the Dominican Republic have this capability.

6. Implementation of the PIPE Project

- ***USAID support through PIPE permitted EDUCA to develop models of how things could work.*** This has furthered EDUCA's credibility. Specifically, EDUCA has shown that textbooks of high quality *can* be produced in a short period of time and distributed at the beginning of the school year. EDUCA also showed that the entire staff of a school, beginning with the director, *should* be trained.

- ***EDUCA's support in the area of textbook development and distribution received high marks.*** Ministry officials, school directors, and teachers universally pointed to the high quality of the content of EDUCA books and materials.
- ***EDUCA received universal acclaim from school directors and teachers alike for the training they received under the PIPE program. Outside of advocacy, this is one of the most visible accomplishments individuals outside of EDUCA refer to when asked about EDUCA's accomplishments.***
- EDUCA did a lot of things "right" that were related to textbook production and director and teacher training:
 - It focused all of its activities (textbook development/distribution, director training, teacher training, and achievement testing) around the implementation of the Plan Decenal and the pending Educational Reform Law.
 - It decided to let substantial training for school directors precede any training for teachers, which paved the way for trained teachers returning to their schools to receive support from their directors.
 - School directors that received training from EDUCA are implementing at least some new management procedures, have become promoters of the Reform, and are maintaining links and exchanges (in the barrios, between public and private sectors, and across NGO networks) that are vital to the Reform and to the philosophy of the PIPE project.
 - It supported EDUCA-trained directors in establishing an alumni association of over 500 directors. This organization has formed a multiple services cooperative of private schools that EDUCA is also supporting. The cooperative could turn out to be a significant voice in pushing from the bottom up to assure the implementation of the Educational Reform Law.
 - Teachers who received training through PIPE are in general agreement that the training content was excellent both for upgrading their knowledge base and for modernizing their pedagogical methods. In particular, teachers found the

training valuable in that they learned to make do with scarce resources and to let children acquire knowledge without the help of textbooks, which were often absent.

- Teachers showed significant increases in knowledge and comprehension of the training materials between pre- and posttests conducted as an integral part of the teacher training.
- Qualitative reports on teacher performance suggest that many are employing a more participatory and stimulating approach rather than teaching by rote. In addition, training has been instrumental in transforming teacher self-confidence, career expectations, and social status.

B. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

As is discussed in more detail at the beginning of the next section, since EDUCA was founded in 1989 the political and economic context has changed. There is a new government with a relatively strong statist mentality. This government (unlike its predecessor) embraces education as a high priority and has taken several visible steps to support education. With an economy that is prospering, this government has the means to support education. Thanks both to EDUCA's efforts and to the current government stance, education is now firmly on the national agenda.

The educational reform that EDUCA played a key role in promoting during the early 1990s was recently, after several years, passed into law. However, getting this reform law implemented is now the big challenge. Messages are mixed from the government regarding its commitment to implementing this law, and Dominican civil society is temporarily in a state of limbo as it looks for signs that will indicate and to what extent the new government is willing to collaborate closely with civil society.

The situations posed above, added to other dynamics within EDUCA itself, put EDUCA in a challenging position. While it has a number of enviable strengths (listed above), EDUCA also has several challenges and areas for improvement. If action is not taken to address these challenges and areas for improvement, EDUCA stands to lose the positive ground it has gained since it was established nearly eight years ago. These challenges/areas of improvement are summarized below.

- ***Members of EDUCA's board have diverging views on what EDUCA's mission should be.*** Times have changed since EDUCA was established. While still an important theme, raising the consciousness of Dominicans concerning the importance of education (an area of strength for EDUCA)

is of lesser priority. Taking action to assure that the recently approved educational reform is implemented has become an urgent priority. Yet members of the EDUCA board are divided on what its current and future role should be.

- ***EDUCA is currently not operating strategically.*** The evaluators got three distinct impressions, both from their observations and through interviews: (a) EDUCA was making decisions in a piecemeal fashion (board members would generate ideas of what they thought should be done; some ideas would be implemented, and others would not); (b) EDUCA Board members were not clear on what their strengths or weaknesses were; and (c) Board members had not taken time to assess changes in the external environment and how these changes might impact on EDUCA operations.
- ***EDUCA also faces the reality that its "sure" source of funding from USAID will be terminating at the end of 1997.*** There has been some discussion recently about steps that EDUCA needs to take to become financially self-sufficient. Some progress has been made (EDUCA now receives some \$10,000 to \$15,000 per month in dues and donations). However, EDUCA had not, at the time of the evaluation, taken a proactive role to assure a continuous source of future funding that will permit it to not only "keep the lights on" on but to be able to play an active role in education, whatever EDUCA decides it to be. A proposed plan for funding was agreed upon by Board members at a January 1997 strategic planning retreat. While some steps were being taken to implement this plan there did not appear to be a clear follow-up strategy in place at the time of the evaluation.
- ***Consciousness raising on the importance of education remains an important role for EDUCA. However, the challenge of implementing the education reform looms high.*** Most individuals interviewed are looking toward EDUCA to play a key role in pulling together individuals from various walks of society, as it did when the Plan Decenal was designed, to assure its implementation. The key question at this juncture is whether EDUCA is ready and/or willing to play this role.
- ***While those individuals in low-income areas who have benefited from EDUCA's services appreciate what EDUCA has provided, EDUCA is still seen as a somewhat elitist organization.*** EDUCA is aware of this and is taking steps to do outreach to NGOs and labor, among others. EDUCA needs to look closely at whether it is currently reaching out enough and getting to grass roots community and barrio groups.

- ***Some of the PIPE activities (e.g., achievement testing and the management information system) were less successful and need to be rethought in terms of implications for future actions.***⁷

In the case of *achievement testing*, there were problems with the tests themselves (the tests did not always cover material that had been taught and the posttest materials were much harder than pre-test materials, making it difficult to judge learning gains adequately), problems with the variables covered in the tests (e.g., data on whether students had books or teachers had training were not collected and thus could not be included in the analysis of outcomes), and problems with the analysis (e.g., many of the most important results of the reform such as autonomy and self-confidence were not tested or analyzed).

In the case of the installation of the *management information system* the system was still incomplete by the end of the PIPE project. Some of the most important data files on schools, teachers, and student performance was either still in the data input stage or not yet related to an integrated data base. The management information system was also fragile in that only two EDUCA staff were competent in handling and using it. Both staff are financed under the soon-to-expire PIPE project. In addition, there was no evidence that either the selection of EDUCA activities or the targeting of service delivery (one of the key objectives of this component) were arrived at through MIS-based analysis. No significant two-way data exchanges had taken place between EDUCA and Ministry of Education staff as planned. Finally, unless EDUCA continues some sort of service delivery to the schools in the National District in Santo Domingo, within 12-24 months the data files will become obsolete. Given the complexity of this system and its relatively high recurrent costs, once EDUCA's project activities and funding level change, EDUCA may find it hard to justify high MIS-related expenditures.

⁷ For more detail see the discussion in Annex A to this report.

IV. EDUCA'S FUTURE

EDUCA is at a cross roads. It has accomplished a great deal in its eight years of existence and has much in its favor. As is indicated in the prior section, however, times have changed and it currently faces a number of challenges, some internal and others external. Those interviewed for the evaluation are quite clear on the role they would like to see EDUCA play in the future. The key question is whether EDUCA is willing and prepared to play this role.

This section first explores the current context in which EDUCA would continue to operate. Then, building on this context and the assessment of EDUCA's strengths and challenges presented in the previous section, this section discusses options for EDUCA's future.

A. Changes in the Context Since EDUCA Was Established in 1989

Since EDUCA began in 1989 there has been a clear up-turn in the Dominican economy. After an average of -.2 percent in average annual growth in GNP per capita between 1980 and 1991, the economy has shown steady positive growth (between 2.9 percent and 5.7 percent between 1992 and 1995).⁸ This means that more funds are available for government taxation and thus spending.

On the political scene there has been a change in government. After 60 years of authoritarian rule, a new President was sworn in a year ago August. Considerably younger than his predecessor, Leonel Fernandez has instilled hope in a number of segments of the Dominican population that there will be positive change. Change, however, comes with its downsides. Whereas the Balaguer government's stance toward civil society was quite predictable, today—over one year after the Fernandez government assumed power—civil society does not know where it stands with the government. The rhetoric is positive in terms of pledges of close collaboration between government and civil society, but the actions are mixed. This has, throughout civil society, created a state of unrest and indecision. Should civil society back the government? Should it push for reform? If it pushes for reform, what kind of stance should it take vis-a-vis the government?

There also have been changes in the education milieu. Between 1991 and 1994, when Malagon was both Executive Director of EDUCA and Minister of Education, relations between EDUCA and the Ministry of Education were excellent. EDUCA profited from its close relationship with the Ministry of Education in terms of the access this afforded to the education sector and the credibility that this brought to the institution. When Malagon left her post as Minister of Education in 1994, however, there was a decided distancing in relations between the Ministry of Education and EDUCA. This has made the work of EDUCA, especially that which depends on working closely with the Ministry of Education, more difficult.

⁸ World Bank. *World Development Indicators*, 1997.

When the PLC government came into power in August 1996 there was a decided shift in the government's attitude toward education. Whereas EDUCA entered a vacuum and played a key role in putting education on the political agenda (and positively influencing an upward shift in central government expenditures on education from 9.5 percent in 1990 to 13.2 percent in 1995),⁹ the new government made education a key priority and has provided many visible signals of the importance it gives to education. Not long after coming into office, Fernandez, with a great deal of fanfare, significantly increased salaries for both teachers and doctors. Teachers working two shifts now earn \$550/month, over three times the official minimum wage.

Other actions taken by Fernandez since assuming his role as President include a monthly event recognizing outstanding elementary school students, whereby the President personally congratulates each student and the students' pictures appear in the newspaper with the President's personal congratulations. In addition, the President is currently in the process of picking up on EDUCA's school adoption initiative and expanding it more broadly.

When EDUCA was formed, one of its initial and highly visible actions was to mobilize the Plan Decenal. The Plan Decenal was approved in 1992, and, based on the Plan Decenal, an Educational Reform Law was drafted. The Educational Reform was finally ratified by Congress in the spring of 1997 with the strong support of President Fernandez. However, there is resistance within key sectors of the government to implementing this law, and the Plan Decenal, on which it was based, is now approximately five years out of date. Numerous interviewees during the evaluation highlighted the importance of both updating the Plan Decenal and taking action to assure that the Educational Reform Law is implemented.

B. Options for the Future

During the interviews carried out with individuals from all walks of society the same two questions were asked: 1) Should EDUCA continue to exist (perhaps its "time" is over and it should dissolve); and 2) If the answer is yes, what should be its key role(s)?

With regard to the first question, every person interviewed opined that EDUCA should definitely continue to exist. When asked what role EDUCA should assume, the overwhelming majority (33 individuals interviewed) indicated that EDUCA's long-term role should be advocacy for educational reform. They indicated that, in the immediate future, EDUCA should serve as a convener/facilitator in assuring that the recently approved educational reform law is implemented. A sizable amount (15 interviewees) indicated that EDUCA should not cease its consciousness raising role. A number referred to successful programs—such as teacher and director training (13 interviewees) and school adoption (7 interviewees)—that should be continued.

⁹ Ibid.

EDUCA is at a key juncture—it can choose to continue as a deliverer of services, much as it has been doing since the Plan Decenal went into effect, or it can return to the advocacy role it was playing before and during the time that the Plan Decenal was being developed.

Below are some thoughts on directions EDUCA might want to take, depending on whether it decides to emphasize its advocacy or its service delivery role.

1. EDUCA as an organization that places priority on advocacy

If EDUCA decides that it would like to give emphasis to advocacy, it should take into consideration the following:

- (a) EDUCA needs to analyze to what extent it is willing to play a key role in promoting the implementation of the Plan Decenal and the recently passed educational reform law. This will have significant implications for how it is structured operationally and the way in which it operates.
- (b) If it decides to give priority to advocacy, EDUCA needs to operate in a very strategic fashion. While there is no one “correct” way to play the advocacy role, members of the board and the executive director need to be lined up together and in full agreement on what the advocacy role will be.
- (c) EDUCA needs to be clear on what its role is in advocacy and its ability to play this role, who its friends and enemies (both actual and potential) are, and what resources (human, financial, other) it has at its disposal to play this role.
- (d) If EDUCA decides to address implementing the Plan Decenal and the Education Reform, it needs to decide whether it will take on a visible leadership role or whether it will operate behind the scenes as a facilitator. In this regard, EDUCA would be well advised to turn the pages back to the early 1990s and examine the role it played with the Plan Decenal. There are a number of lessons to be learned from this experience, most very positive.
- (e) Finally, EDUCA needs to decide, if it takes on service delivery activities in addition to its advocacy role, to what extent these activities contribute (either directly or indirectly) to its advocacy “mission.” Specifically, EDUCA needs to analyze what steps need to be taken to make sure that implementing these activities will not

be a “drain” on its personnel and financial resources, thus diverting resources from its primary advocacy role.

2. EDUCA primarily in a service delivery mode

If EDUCA decides to focus on service delivery (and even if it assumes service delivery functions as ancillary to its advocacy role), it needs to take on activities that are within its capability to manage and for which there is a clear budget to assure their successful implementation. When taking on a new activity EDUCA should be studious in asking itself the following questions:

- (a) To what extent will the activity benefit EDUCA’s mission/vision?
- (b) Is this an activity that EDUCA can do well and that is appropriate for EDUCA to assume?
- (c) Does EDUCA have the administrative, technical, and financial capability to carry it out?
- (d) What are the potential benefits in terms of establishing/strengthening relations with other groups?
- (e) Are there risks—in taking on this activity, entering into another organization’s turf, and “stepping on their toes”?

There are certain advantages to EDUCA, if it chooses to either enter into new service delivery activities and/or to continue/expand services that it is already providing. For example, EDUCA currently has the reputation of playing a valuable role in teacher and director training and school adoption. There are advantages to continuing for the immediate future with these services and/or expanding on them. For example, EDUCA may want to continue its support for the emerging association of school directors and/or establish a scholarship fund for school directors and teachers to attend the existing courses that it helped to establish.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. For EDUCA

General Recommendations

1. Update the mission.

— In order to do this EDUCA should engage in an exercise of strategic planning that focuses on its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, friends and enemies. Given the rapidly changing environment in the Dominican Republic, this should be something that the EDUCA's Executive Director and the Board do on an ongoing basis, not just once a year at a retreat set aside for this purpose.

— If EDUCA identifies advocacy as a priority, it must be particularly strategic. EDUCA should start by educating its own membership (especially those who recently joined EDUCA's board) regarding what is in the Plan Decenal and the contents of the recently approved Educational Reform Law.

— Within the context of its strategic plan, EDUCA needs to decide whether to continue to focus primarily on basic education or whether to expand this focus (including, for example, secondary education). At the time of the evaluation it was clear from the interviews with Board members that there were differing opinions on this topic.

2. Consider whether its membership (members of the Board, advisors) meets the needs of the revised mission.

— EDUCA should consider whether the current structure of the board and its advisory committee (board membership limited to private businessmen; advisory committee composed of educators, academics, and others) makes the most sense. Several individuals interviewed, both within and outside of EDUCA, have suggested that the time has come for EDUCA to consider opening its board to individuals from a variety of backgrounds—academia, education, mass media, and grass roots civil society among others. Depending on the direction that EDUCA decides to go in the next few years, the organization should consider expanding its membership (Board and/or advisors) to include individuals from sectors not currently represented on either the board or the advisory group: NGO and grassroots sector, mass media, labor.

3. Review whether the structure (including roles of the Board, the Executive Director, sub-committees, and its personnel) meet its new needs.

— Related to the above, and depending on who EDUCA decides to include in its Board and advisory committee, EDUCA should determine what the roles and relationships should be among the Board of Directors, the Executive, and the Advisory Committee. Once it has defined its mission and the compositions/roles of the Board and Advisory Committee, EDUCA should also develop a profile of the personnel that it needs and make adjustments accordingly.

4. Assume a strong business mentality.

— As any enterprise, EDUCA should operate with a “bottom line.” It should have clear, and agreed upon, criteria for deciding when to take on (or not take on) new activities. These criteria should include whether the activity fits within EDUCA’s mission and whether it is cost effective, both for EDUCA and for education in the Dominican Republic in general.

— EDUCA should develop a realistic budget that permits it to carry out its mission with the funds that it has available and/or that it is sure that it will be able to obtain.

5. In recrafting its internal roles and relationships, familiarize itself with Board/Advisor/Executive Director relationships in other successful NGOs in the Dominican Republic. Also, EDUCA should seek the assistance of an outside individual/firm with experience in organizational development.

— In this regard, EDUCA has a variety of models of other organizations that it can look toward. Among these models are CONEP, another business organization to which most of the private sector members of EDUCA belong, and the Democratic Initiatives Project, which is lodged in the Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra and has a strong and very active board.

— EDUCA should also consider hiring an outside person/organization, preferably based in the Dominican Republic, with organizational development expertise to assist EDUCA on matters related to strategic planning and organizational development. EDUCA may need the advice/assistance of this individual/organization on an ongoing basis over the coming months. There are a number of qualified individuals/organizations in the Dominican Republic that can take on this role.

— To facilitate this process, the Executive Director should be empowered by the Board to come up with a proposal for internal restructuring of the EDUCA board and advisory committee, and for redesigning its relationship with the Executive Director and her staff. The Executive Director may want to select two or three members of the EDUCA Board/advisory committee to assist her in this endeavor.

6. Continue looking for “new blood” for the organization.

— One of the many things that EDUCA has done “right,” and that it should continue doing, is that it has in recent years brought in young businesspeople who offer a fresh perspective to the Board. At this point in time, given EDUCA’s cache, there are a number of prominent Dominicans from various walks of life—businesspeople and individuals in mass media, the NGO/grassroots sector, and labor—who would be delighted, if asked, to either serve on EDUCA’s board or in an advisory capacity.

7. Continue doing what it does well and is within its administrative/managerial capacity.

— The evaluators cannot emphasize this enough. One of EDUCA’s strengths is that it has, for the most part, taken on roles that it is capable of managing with staff and financial resources. However, now that EDUCA’s sure source of funding (USAID) is coming to an end and the organization is in the throes of considering its future course. EDUCA must be very careful not to launch into new activities without carefully considering whether they make sense given EDUCA’s mission and its capacity to manage and finance these activities.

8. Adopt strategies that have worked in the past when it makes decisions about which new activities it will take on.

— EDUCA was wise in contracting out to established educational institutions to design and implement both the directors’ and the teachers’ training programs. This strategy obviated the need for EDUCA to develop the technical and administrative structures to carry these activities out. Another strength of this approach was that it resulted in several institutions developing the capacity to deliver training to teachers and directors. This capacity will long outlive EDUCA assistance. EDUCA also gained friends and supporters among these institutions.

9. Continue playing a catalytic role by commissioning studies that will inform educational policy and bring to national attention themes that the government needs to address.

— EDUCA has been successful in the past in impacting on the educational policy arena by commissioning studies, financed with funding from the USAID PIPE

project. To the extent feasible, and especially if EDUCA decides to emphasize its advocacy role, EDUCA should identify and commission further studies.

Recommendations that are specific to the PIPE Project

10. Continue contact with school directors and teachers that have been trained through EDUCA/PIPE.

— As an outgrowth of the director training provided under EDUCA/PIPE, there is an incipient association of directors that has been nurtured by EDUCA. EDUCA is supporting the establishment of this organization and assisting it to form a cooperative. EDUCA should continue supporting this group in its endeavors.

— The teachers who have graduated from the EDUCA/PIPE program should be encouraged to attend the yearly APRENDO conference. EDUCA also should consider a suggestion made by several teachers in a focus group meeting held for purposes of the evaluation that EDUCA serve as a vehicle for the publication of a newsletter through which graduates of the EDUCA/PIPE program can network and share experiences.

11. Reconsider investing directly in continuing the achievement testing program. However, it may want to consider becoming a part of the national debate on issues related to achievement testing.

— With the termination of the PIPE project EDUCA no longer has a need to follow-up on EDUCA schools unless EDUCA enters into a program through the World Bank and IDB to continue teacher and/or director training. Without a concrete need for follow-up there is little rationale for maintaining a relatively expensive achievement testing program.

— Nevertheless, EDUCA may want to consider (and apparently has already taken steps to) becoming an actor in the current national debate on the pros and cons of achievement testing.

— If it decides to continue with achievement testing (e.g., should it receive further funding for the delivery of teacher or director training), EDUCA should consider targeted follow-up of teachers and directors participating in PIPE to better understand the factors affecting improvements in student achievement.

B. For USAID ¹⁰

- 1. Consider, as appropriate, reprogramming existing funds under the PIPE program to assist EDUCA as it embarks on its future.**

There is a small amount of funding left in the grant agreement with EDUCA under PIPE that is available for reprogramming. The evaluators have highly recommended, and USAID has already taken action to encourage EDUCA to utilize these funds in a creative fashion to further the tasks that lay ahead in the immediate future: arriving at a clear vision/mission; revising the roles of the Board, advisors, and Executive Director; and—as appropriate—launching the next generation of advocacy activities.

- 2. With EDUCA, consider taking steps to disseminate the EDUCA experience.**

The information obtained from this evaluation, and especially the lessons learned laid out in the next section, are highly relevant for other countries where there are businessmen who are interested in engaging in an endeavor such as the one that EDUCA has embarked on. Especially given that USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean is giving emphasis to policy reform in the education sector, USAID should consider identifying mechanisms for transcribing relevant findings from this evaluation and converting it into a case study for broader readership both within and outside of USAID.

C. For the Ministry of Education

- 1. Building on the existing infrastructure established by EDUCA, arrange for financing to train directors of public and private schools throughout the country who have not yet benefited from the EDUCA sponsored training.**

EDUCA, by all accounts, has done a superb job of stimulating the creation of a quality program to train elementary school directors. This program is currently operated by three universities who have developed the curriculum. However, only 10 percent of the country's primary school directors have received this training. Serious consideration should be given by the Ministry of Education and the World Bank/IDB/EU to supporting this program under the loan that was just approved.

¹⁰ It is important to note here that, since USAID funding is coming to an end and there is no more funding forthcoming for education in the Dominican Republic, we are talking about some very specific and immediate follow-up recommendations.

2. **Look for synergies between itself and EDUCA and look toward ways of forging its own strategic alliance with EDUCA.**

EDUCA has, in the past, had very successful collaborations with the Ministry of Education—in the design and delivery of textbooks, teacher training, and director training. Especially with the recent passage of the Educational Reform Law, which encourages close linkages between the Ministry of Education and civil society, the Ministry of Education would benefit from reaching out to EDUCA to look at ways both institutions can work closely together to improve the quality of basic education services in the Dominican Republic.

D. For Other Donors

1. **Building on the existing infrastructure established by EDUCA, provide financing to train public and private school directors throughout the country who have not yet benefited from the EDUCA-sponsored training.**

This recommendation, already stated in the prior section, pertains to both the Ministry of Education and other donors—specifically the World Bank, IDB, and European Community who are jointly funding a major loan that was recently approved by Congress for the Ministry of Education.

2. **Explore mechanisms for entering into a strategic alliance with civil society to assure the best use of funds under the World Bank/IDB/European Union second loan.**

A little over a year before this evaluation was carried out the IDB convened a meeting of civil society organizations to discuss how the IDB might work more closely with them to assure the implementation of the World Bank/IDB/EU education loan, once it was improved. While a number of good ideas were put forth, there was apparently little or no follow-up. As is indicated above, in the section on recommendations for USAID (and assuming EDUCA adequately addresses the evaluation recommendation), it may be to the interest of these three donors to seek out EDUCA for assistance in forging a strategic alliance with civil society.

VI. UPDATE

This section focuses on progress made by EDUCA in implementing the evaluation recommendations between July 8—when the evaluators debriefed the EDUCA Executive Director, Board of Directors, and Advisors—and September when the final report was written. It is based on telephone interviews conducted from Washington D.C. with the Executive Director of EDUCA and several members of the Board and Advisory Committee as well as telephone interviews with several individuals that the team was not able to interview during their visit to the Dominican Republic in July.

The interviews with those related to EDUCA had a dual focus: progress since July in implementing the evaluation recommendations; and an assessment by those interviewed of whether and to what extent they envisioned that EDUCA would be implementing these recommendations. The evaluators' impressions based on these interviews are outlined briefly below.

Overall, the evaluators are cautiously optimistic that EDUCA is headed in the right direction and is taking the evaluation recommendations seriously. However, the evaluators would like to emphasize that two key challenges for EDUCA for the immediate future remain to be addressed: definition and agreement upon its mission; and the composition and role of its Board of Directors and Advisory Committee.

- EDUCA's new Executive Director, who was named in early July to fill this slot, seems to be off to a good start in taking on her new leadership role, although much remains to be done to establish herself in this position. Immediately after her nomination to the Executive Directorship was announced, she received both a personal phone call from both the President of the Republic and a letter from the Minister of Education congratulating her on being named as EDUCA's Executive Director. In August President Fernandez invited her as part of his official delegation to Mexico where she addressed the social sectors. The Minister of Educacion also named her to a high level UNESCO Commission. The Minister of Education has met with her on several occasions and agreed to work closely with EDUCA on key, upcoming events including EDUCA's annual back to school mass media event, "Alegria de la Escuela," and the yearly APRENDO conference scheduled to take place at the end of October.
- The Executive Director has been empowered by the Board to prepare and submit to the board a proposal for a revised mission statement along with a proposal for revision/ clarification of roles of the Executive Director, and Board and Advisory Committee members. As of the time of drafting this evaluation she was involved in initial consultations with other organizations to see how they defined their Executive Director/Board relationships. Several members of the Board and the Advisory Committee have offered to assist her in this endeavor.

- The Executive Director and some of the key members of the Board have been active in fund raising. In late July EDUCA submitted a proposal to a company called Brugal, which annually provides a two million peso (\$140,000) award to worthy education endeavors in the Dominican Republic. In addition, a number of other fund raising schemes are in the process of being designed and implemented. EDUCA realizes that it has to come up with a detailed financial plan and has contracted with a qualified person to assist them in this endeavor.
- On the education reform front, EDUCA has organized and carried out two fora: one addressing a key issue that surfaced in June when the Ministry of Education stated that it was planning to cap private school tuition; and another addressing a recent controversy over failures in the Ministry of Education's achievement testing program. In both instances, EDUCA took advantage of the opportunities raised by these high profile situations to draw together highly respected individuals from the government and civil society to participate in these fora. EDUCA is as yet undecided on what role, if any, it plans to play in promoting the implementation of the newly approved educational reform law.
- EDUCA has also made progress in reaching out to NGOs. In August it accepted an invitation to become a member of a recently formed NGO Alliance. However, in doing so, EDUCA realizes that it must reach out even more broadly to networks of grass roots civil society organizations if it is to shed its still somewhat elitist image.
- Finally, and this is quite significant given what it could portend for the future, EDUCA has been approached by a couple of leading businessmen who, in addition to expressing their willingness to donate funding to EDUCA, would like to become actively involved with the organization. In addition several leaders—in the Dominican press, labor sector, government, and grassroots mobilization—indicated that they would be happy, if asked, to work closely with EDUCA.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

The EDUCA experience provides a rich repertoire of lessons learned for civil society organizations in other countries that might be interested in playing an active role in either guiding education policy or supporting the design and delivery of quality education services. Lessons are drawn from the material provided in the first five sections of this report together with the evaluators' perspective based on other similar experiences.

A. Lessons Learned for Donors

1. **Take advantage of local initiatives and respect the desires of those who have come up with the initiatives.**

EDUCA was not a USAID or other donor "creation". It was a genuine initiative on the part of a group of Dominican businessmen who were committed to improving education in the Dominican Republic. USAID assisted and nurtured the process, in some cases perhaps directing more than some members of the Board might have wanted. Throughout however, USAID respected EDUCA's autonomy.

2. **Take advantage of opportunities as they arise.**

Often the best of outside donor ideas fall on barren ground when there conditions are not "right" to support them. In the case of EDUCA there was a confluence of interests: USAID wanted to work in basic education but was frustrated with its attempt to work with the Dominican Ministry of Education. EDUCA, also frustrated with the education situation in the Dominican Republic, came to USAID for assistance. USAID sized up EDUCA, decided the timing was "right", and took the risk of helping this incipient organization get off the ground.

3. **If the objective is to help build an institution that is in the process of being formed, support the institution in its entirety.**

When EDUCA was born in the late 1980s, USAID was interested in achieving concrete results that could be seen during the life of its funding for EDUCA and thus decided to limit its support to "standard" activities such as textbook design and distribution, teacher training, achievement testing, and installation of a management information system. It did not, as EDUCA wished, become actively involved in helping it to achieve its full mission, which included consciousness raising and advocacy activities, as the outcomes of the latter were less certain and more difficult to measure.¹¹ EDUCA moved forward and became active in all of these areas in spite of the fact that funding for some areas was not forthcoming. While the

¹¹ Some support was provided later in the implementation of the project, but support for consciousness raising and advocacy remained of relatively low priority.

results were positive, outcomes may have been even stronger had USAID taken a more holistic approach from the beginning and supported EDUCA in achieving its broader mission.

4. Be flexible: support the grantee in adapting to changing times/opportunities.

When EDUCA began, education in the Dominican Republic was at rock-bottom, the Dominican economy was in disarray, and the country was under autocratic rule for many years. Over time, the economy improved, there was a major change in government in 1996 and—with EDUCA’s assistance—both the government and society at large gave higher priority to education. While there was some flexibility in the USAID grant to address EDUCA’s changing needs as they arose (for example: USAID over time increasingly supported advocacy activities), USAID support could have been even more flexible.

5. Exercise creativity in the use of indicators.

USAID adopted a somewhat “traditional” system for tracking project impact focusing on key outputs (teachers trained, textbooks distributed, achievement and management information systems established) and national level indicators (increases in completion rates and academic achievement). While these indicators were appropriate for monitoring PIPE, they did not address much of what EDUCA was really achieving. USAID and other donors, especially if they are supporting programs that have a strong advocacy/consciousness raising focus, need to look toward perhaps more “creative” measures of impact (e.g., attitudes on the part of the public toward education; steps taken to promote, approve, and implement key reforms) that more accurately reflect gains made.

In addition, as recent publications on support for educational reform have suggested,¹² policy reform—especially if there is to be broad-based buy in—is inherently a slow and “messy” process. While targets can be established, if the objective is local ownership and buy-in, the achievement of these targets often takes longer than expected. Also, there are apt to be changes over time that need to be reflected in adjusted targets.

B. Lessons for the Grantee/Implementing Organization

1. Establish basic agreement within the organization on your mission and vision.

Organizations, when they are born, are often composed of a group of individuals who have good intentions, ambitious dreams, and a broad range of ideas of what they would like to accomplish. In a sector such as education, where there are a number of directions

¹² USAID. *Education Reform Support*, 1997.

that the organization can pursue, it is important to narrow the broad range of options to forge clarity early on among its key membership concerning the organization's vision and mission. Both may well change over time, but a sine qua non to success is having those changes take place within an atmosphere of consensus among key members of the organization.

2. **Be prepared to adjust program aspects—the programmatic focus and composition of the Board of Directors, the advisors, and the Executive Director—to changing times.**

A key lesson that EDUCA has learned over the past eight years and that it is facing right now is that as times change the organization needs to change. If the organization is to remain "relevant" it may need periodically to adjust or even dramatically change its mission. These adjustments, in turn, can lead to the need to make changes in the nature and composition of the board, advisors, and even the Executive Director. This is a challenge that EDUCA currently faces.

3. **In an environment where things are constantly changing, be strategic/constantly take temperature.**

This is a corollary to the prior lesson learned. EDUCA has faced, over the years, many changes in its external environment. In several instances these changes (e.g., in the economy, in the political situation) were outside of its control. In others (status of education) EDUCA was able to shape some of the changes. However, with the recent change in government, changes are currently taking place in education that are outside of its control. If EDUCA, and organizations like it, are going to grow and thrive in changing environments such as these, they must adopt a strategic stance. A yearly strategic planning seminar is not sufficient; the "outside temperature" must be taken regularly (sometimes daily) and adjustments taken to keep up with changing times.

4. **As part of the temperature taking process, periodically reflect on whether the organization needs to continue to exist: be prepared to either cease functioning or be "reborn."**

No organization consciously wants to work itself out of existence. However, unless the organization is willing to periodically step back and ask itself internally (as well as check with others outside of the organization) whether the organization has completed its role and should cease to exist, it may not permit itself to grow. One of the questions asked by the evaluation of individuals within and outside of EDUCA was whether EDUCA had completed its role and should cease to exist. While everyone interviewed indicated that they thought EDUCA should continue to exist, the question provoked some very interesting observations on why EDUCA should continue to exist and what its future role should be.

- 5. Join forces with other organizations. As appropriate serve as convener, facilitator, and/or mobilizer. Be prepared to take either a visible leadership role or a low key, behind-the-scenes role.**

One of EDUCA's strengths, and the factors behind its success to date, has been its ability to team up with other institutions in the Dominican Republic and, depending on the situation, assume different roles. In some instances (Plan Decenal) EDUCA has successfully served as a convener, facilitator, and mobilizer of a number of sometime disparate groups. In others (training of teachers and directors), where it contracted out services, EDUCA was in a financial leadership role but technically worked behind the scenes to encourage different educational institutions to work together. In the case of consciousness raising (organizing and conducting the annual APRENDO conferences and working with mass media to carry out the many mass media campaigns emphasizing the importance of education) EDUCA has been in a clear leadership role. It is this ability—depending on the situation to either take the back seat and facilitate from behind the scenes or serve in a visible leadership role—that has been a key factor in building EDUCA's credibility and establishing for it a "trademark" as being one of the leading education institutions in the Dominican Republic.

- 6. Look for ways to complement/build on the strengths of others. Avoid, at all costs, entering into unnecessary competition with potential allies.**

This has been another of EDUCA strengths. EDUCA, in contracting out to other educational institutions in the Dominican Republic to implement the USAID funded director and teacher training programs, recognized that it did not have either the technical or administrative ability to launch these programs on its own. In contracting out these services to established educational institutions EDUCA built on their strengths and helped institutionalize programs in these institutions that would long outlive EDUCA/USAID assistance. Perhaps of most significance, given the challenges it faces over the coming months, it has built powerful allies that are eager to collaborate with and support EDUCA in any way they can.

- 7. Keep an eye on the target. Do not deviate with side interests/opportunities that don't fit within the target unless the decision is deliberate.**

This is currently a challenge faced by many NGOs such as EDUCA that have an uncertain financial base. Keeping an eye on the targets the organization has set out for itself becomes more difficult when the outside environment is constantly changing, as is the case in the Dominican Republic.

A key remedy is having agreement among all key actors regarding the organization's vision and mission along with clarity in roles and responsibilities. This permits the

organization to occasionally deviate from its target, but with a clear sense of the impact that this deviation will have on the Agency's mission and its operational capability.

8. Build on strengths/recognize and address weaknesses.

This is a rather generic and perhaps obvious lesson but one that is not to be understated. EDUCA has a number of strengths. It also has some significant weaknesses. If the Executive Director and Board are not always constantly assessing strengths and weaknesses and taking action to build on strengths and address weaknesses, significant gains made in the past can be lost.

9. If an organization is composed primarily of businesspeople, examine what's in it for the business sector; recognize that there will (and probably should) be an element of vested self-interest.

Few organizations operate effectively unless there is an underlying agenda or self-interest that gives them a reason for being. Corporate philanthropy usually has an underlying rationale: the corporation wants to present a "good face" to the market that it wants to buy its products. In the case of EDUCA, the businessmen that established it—while deeply committed to improving education for all in the Dominican Republic—had as underlying vested interests having a workforce that they could draw from composed of people who could read and write. They also knew, from their reading, that countries that have shown dramatic economic growth (ex: experience of the Asian Tigers) have been able to do so by investing heavily in basic education.

10. If the organization is made up of a group of businesspeople, examine what its members have to offer to the organization and build on/around their strengths.

EDUCA, as an organization of leading businessmen in the Dominican Republic, has put to good use a number of the strengths that its members bring to the organization: their "poder de convocatoria" (access to high levels in both the Dominican government and civil society); ability to convene high level individuals/groups; free access to the press; ability to raise funds; and a "can do" mentality. As organizations such as EDUCA become established, or take steps to strengthen themselves by expanding their membership base, they are well advised to examine what qualities they need in their members to be effective, scan their membership to see what qualities their members have, and then seek out new members to both fill gaps and complement the strengths of existing membership.

11. Project operations can develop a life of their own, conflicting with project goals

EDUCA had identified (correctly) the school director as the pivotal point for implementing the reform. Teacher training and everything else was, therefore, contingent on the previous director's training. This condition was included to guarantee that the benefits of teacher training would be fully realized. Despite this inclusion, in 1993 project operations made it advisable to buy into the PRODEP/World Bank teacher training program,¹³ with EDUCA paying the cost of training 420 teachers. This meant that at that time EDUCA produced exactly what it had tried to avoid—teachers who were working in schools whose directors had not yet been trained.

12. Make sure the organization has the right mix of talents in the right places.

This may sound like a truism. However, organizations—especially when recently established—often set objectives that are difficult to meet either because they are too broad and/or the organization lacks the mix of talents required to achieve these objectives. In the case of EDUCA, and organizations like it, the challenge is to identify these talents and decide where they should most suitably be lodged: within an activist Board that will assume direct responsibility for carrying out activities that are critical to achieving the organization's goals; within an advisory committee or committees; and/or vested in the Executive Director and his/her staff.

13. If the organization has an interest in advocating for policy reform, examine how policy reform fits into its priorities and structure the organization accordingly.

Organizations that focus primarily on policy advocacy tend to have very different structural needs from organizations that focus primarily on service delivery. While both need to have clear and agreed upon mission statements and be strategic, organizations that focus on policy advocacy must be particularly strategic. While these organizations will need several "doers" on the staff and board, they will also need broad-based thinkers who have strong analytic skills: individuals who are constantly looking at the big picture, assessing the outside environment, and looking for opportunities and challenges. This becomes even more important when the organization is operating in an external political and social environment that is constantly changing and is largely outside of its control. This is a challenge that EDUCA currently faces if it decides to take on a primarily advocacy function.

¹³ Arguments in favor were that: (a) a buy-in only meant preparatory work; (b) results could be produced quickly; and (c) collaboration with other donors and existing local efforts was considered a virtue.

EDUCA EVALUATION

ANNEXES

ANNEX A ASSESSMENT OF THE PIPE PROJECT

1. Key design features

Starting with the Project Paper, we find that the project goal is a general one: "to improve the efficiency and quality of the Dominican Republic's public and private primary education system." In order to achieve this goal, the project has undertaken to strengthen the institutional capacity of EDUCA, a local private organization engaged in public advocacy for basic education, and to assist this NGO in carrying out activities under the following components: (a) training for school personnel; (b) achievement testing; and (c) textbook and materials development.

The design includes several features that distinguish it from other projects both here and elsewhere and that deserve attention in the context of an evaluation:

- focusing on school quality and internal efficiency rather than access in order to achieve the desired increase in educational levels;
- working through a NGO rather than through established government agencies;
- including public sector schools rather than concentrating on private schools alone, as one might have expected from this NGO;
- linking up with ongoing efforts of educational renewal rather than inventing programs and institutions; and
- subcontracting all major activities to local institutions rather than attempting to implement directly.

It is important to note that PIPE represented a net addition to EDUCA. Public advocacy for education in general and the promotion of the Plan Decenal in particular, the two most important activities of EDUCA up to 1990, were not even made part of the support under PIPE; we find them to be included only much later.

2. Modifications

While there have been dramatic changes in EDUCA's environment, funding level, and staffing over time, the changes to the PIPE project have been relatively minor and completely in line with the original design.

- The Phase I Grantee (AED) ceased operations after a minor extension of services (to Feb. 28, 1995).

- The original quantitative targets for training of school directors and teachers were reduced to more realistic levels (from 900 to 800 directors and from 8,400 to 4,000 teachers).
- The MIS system changed hardware, software, and the respective training needs.
- The subcomponent of Professional Development Centers was put in place later than had been planned originally.
- A budget increase of \$ 380,000 was accorded in 1995 for the purpose of increasing the teacher training component of the project, particularly long-term in-service training.

3. Project output targets and achievements

3.1 EDUCA staff trained and internal control systems in place

Senior staff currently consists of an administrator, a curriculum and training specialist, and a research and MIS specialist. All three have been adequately trained and are performing well. Since the MIS system is not yet fully functional they are carrying out their tasks in a rather traditional way, through personal contacts and monitoring, without the constant reliance on computers typical of MIS-based operations. The level of recognition and appreciation of their contributions among the first and second level beneficiaries (e.g., universities and teachers) is very high.

The absence of an executive director is a serious shortcoming, not so much at the level of everyday office operations—which appear beyond reproach—but in terms of maintaining focus, doing strategic planning, and standing up to the heterogenous ideas and interests of a very diverse board. In addition, there is currently nobody who has the authority to constantly explain and defend EDUCA in the public arena in the way the previous executive director had done.

Junior staff include one person each in charge of MIS, accounting, fund raising, and school adoption, and two assistants (accounting and administration). Support personnel include a driver and a janitor. All of them have been selected appropriately and are performing well.

It is clear that this number of staff is an absolute minimum for an operation of EDUCA's level of financing and complexity. Nevertheless, it is adequate for an agency that contracts out most of its major activities, especially the labour intensive school services.

Internal control systems for financial management, procurement, and personnel are functioning.

3.2 Training of school administrators ¹

Output: The implementation of this component has been excellent. Split into 19 different contracts with three institutions (INTEC, UNPHU, UASD), 811 school directors have been trained, 630 of whom were certified by early 1997. While this will leave the project somewhat short of the original output target of 900, it is still above the revised target of 800. The fact that the project did not go even further is explained by EDUCA having nearly exhausted its recruitment base. The project could easily have surpassed the target by relaxing its 13 selection criteria (reprinted by Fitzgerald and Gonzalez, 1994: annex 9) but this would have carried a high cost of legitimacy and efficiency. The project's aim was not to provide temporary assistance to the worst and most desperate cases—those private business enterprises that are schools only by name. Quite to the contrary, the project selects those schools where upgrading could lead to permanent improvements and conformity with the standards of the Plan Decenal.

Sequencing: The decision to let substantial training for directors precede any training of teachers turned out to be excellent. Focus groups have expressed high levels of satisfaction among teachers where this decision was in fact carried out and considerable frustration in those cases where teachers were struggling without their directors' support, because the latter had not been trained. It is our impression that in most cases the sequencing was done properly. However, the current MIS installation did not allow us to verify this impression.

Training content: The standard two-year program (two summers and the following academic years) provided instruction in all aspects of school management as well as an introduction to the pedagogical renewal contained in the Plan Decenal. Since the majority of participants were directors of private schools, EDUCA's training has probably helped to make their businesses more competitive and profitable. Several have secured loans and bought properties with the advice of their (EDUCA) trainers. More importantly, however, they have opened up their schools to the Reform.

Follow-up: The single most highly appreciated aspect of the organization of directors' training has been the "seguimiento"—the fact that the intense one-month training during the summer was followed by monthly meetings, in smaller groups, throughout the following school year. In the case of private schools with their chronically deficient supervision this has permitted a sustained exchange of experiences and the emergence of support networks that were new and very welcome indeed.

Impact: There are no data that would permit the evaluators to measure the impact of this component at the school level. However, by their own testimony the directors indicated several things: (a) they learned a lot and have proceeded to implement at least some new management procedures; (b) they have become promoters of the Reform and try to make their teachers apply

¹ The term "Administrators" refers to the same personnel referred to in Spanish as "directors."

the new pedagogical principles; and (c) they now feel part of a general movement of renewal and are maintaining some of the links and exchanges (in the barrio, between public and private sectors, and across NGO networks) that were first established through the project. In particular, working with parents' associations appears to affect the way the school relates to the community and becomes a more active part of civil society.

One impact of great potential significance is the emergence, under EDUCA's guidance, of an Association of Alumni of the directors training program and of a Multiple Services Cooperative of Private Schools. Two constitutive meetings of these new organizations have already taken place (assembling over 500 directors), and formative workshops are planned for July 1997. Should these new structures prove viable and effective—as evidenced by legal recognition, a substantial number of paid-up members, a workable program, and effective service provision, e.g., in the field of mortgages for school plants—the cooperative could help make private sector employment much more competitive with public sector-employment, competing for enrollments as well as for foreign financing and legitimacy. It is unlikely that the Ministry could carry out substantial reforms without the support of such an organization.

3.3 In-service teacher training

Output: The original targets of in-service training for 3,000 private sector non-certified teachers and 5,400 public and private sector certified teachers were revised in 1994 (?). While the former target was maintained at 3,000, the latter was reduced drastically to only 1,000. There appear to have been several reasons for this reduction. First, the original targets had been set in the absence of adequate information on the size and training levels of the private sector teaching force. Nobody had any idea in 1990 of what the EDUCA-CESDEM school survey was to reveal in 1995, i.e., that private schools accounted for as much as half of the primary enrollments in the National District. Based on this finding, the major training effort had to target non-certified teachers in the private sector. Second, EDUCA opted for long-term training, typically lasting for two years, rather than the short training stints assumed in the Project Paper (PP is curiously silent on the length of training cycles but given budgetary provisions must have assumed mostly short cycles). This modification was certainly appropriate in view of the more uncertain improvements typically associated with one-shot, short-term, in-service training. Finally, the first World Bank and IDB loans invested massively in training for certified teachers, thereby reducing the need for EDUCA/PIPE to do the same.

EDUCA has surpassed the revised output target (3,000) by training 3,113 non-certified teachers in eight different training institutions (UNPHU, PUCMM, UASD, NFEMEJIA, UNICA, UNEV, FHC, UNAD). The target providing long-term training for certified teachers (1,000) was met by providing long-term training to 891 teachers and short-term training to 4,448.

Sequencing: Judging from teachers' comments as well as from verbal and written reports, the effort to coordinate teachers' and directors' training did pay off. About three quarters of the teachers find themselves in situations where the entire school is committed to the Reform. Given

the rapid change of the entire system, more could not be expected. However, a coordinated sequence of training does not guarantee a successful implementation of a Reform. School materials and textbooks are frequently unavailable so that teachers find themselves re-immersed in an environment that has remained largely unchanged. Curtailing the essential sequence—director's training, teacher's training, and supply of educational materials—makes it impossible to achieve the dramatic and lasting improvement of school quality that might otherwise have been possible.

Training content: There is general agreement that the training content was excellent both for the upgrading of the teacher's knowledge base and for the modernization of pedagogical methods. Teachers frequently viewed the EDUCA-sponsored training as a means to make up for their deficient levels of general knowledge, in addition to the more specific pedagogical instruction (Focus Group June 20, p. 1). It was felt to be particularly valuable that teachers learned to make do with scarce resources and to let children acquire knowledge without the help of textbooks.

Follow-up: Since the EDUCA approach focuses on directors, neither EDUCA nor the implementing institutions make a major effort to continue contacts with individual teachers after the end of the training, beyond the open invitation to the annual APRENDO conference. This might be considered a missed opportunity since teachers would greatly appreciate a continuing re-enforcement of the newly acquired knowledge, the new contacts and their general becoming part of the grand movement of educational reform. Given the cost and logistical difficulties, however, it is understandable that EDUCA has so far abstained from any follow-up centered upon individual teachers.

Impact: The impact of teacher training can be assessed at several levels, five of which are discussed below: the teacher as student; the teacher as teacher; the student; the school; and the community. It should be stated right away that measuring the impact of teacher training at these five levels cannot be more than a matter of crude estimation at this time. Problems such as the following make such measurement difficult:

- individual teachers differ in their intellectual abilities, original knowledge base, and capacity to retain course content;
- personal characteristics and pedagogical skill levels will greatly influence the transmission of newly acquired knowledge;
- training content was not fully standardized across training institutions; and
- school characteristics may influence a teacher's capacity to achieve desired results.

All this means that in the end we frequently cannot say for sure which results are attributable to the EDUCA-sponsored teacher training. Given these limitations, the following impacts can be seen as reasonably well documented:

- Teacher as student

Pre- and posttests, which were conducted as an integral part of teacher training, generally showed significant increases in knowledge and comprehension of the training materials.

- Teacher as teacher

No quantitative statements can be made about the student level learning outcomes of the EDUCA-sponsored teacher training. However, qualitative reports on teacher performance suggest that many teachers are indeed employing a more participatory and stimulating approach, rather than the teaching and learning by rote that was characteristic of an earlier day. How much of this change in teaching methods can be attributed directly to the training received by EDUCA is uncertain but teachers in the focus groups tended to give the project almost exclusive credit. One thing that does appear certain is that the movement associated with the Plan Decenal was the principal force behind the pedagogical renewal in Dominican schools.

The EDUCA training has also been instrumental in transforming the self-confidence, the career expectations, and the social status of teachers. Again, part of this transformation can be credited directly to the training received, while another part must be attributed more generally to the changes associated with the Plan Decenal.

Teachers frequently see their training as a stepping stone towards further degrees and professional alternatives. The recent salary increases may have reduced this problem somewhat but the fact that most of the participating universities have given academic credits for the in-service training might aggravate it.

- Student

Student level impact is by far the most important justification for the teacher training program. Large numbers of students have therefore been tested by an independent firm (ASISA) contracted by EDUCA. There is every evidence that these tests were performed in a competent and neutral fashion and that the results can be trusted. However, no attempt has been made so far to document and disaggregate the multitude of variables influencing student performance on these tests. Using the numbers as they were reported, therefore, the only meaningful comparison is the one between an individual student's score and the class mean

for the same test, and even that comparison must be interpreted in the most restrictive way since basic variables such as student age and the possession of a textbook are not reported.²

- School

Private school teachers and directors are generally convinced that their training has improved school quality and should eventually translate into increasing enrollments. However, at this time many think that the public sector may well receive most of the enrollment increases because it has become more attractive recently by increasing salaries, drawing the best teachers from the private schools and embarking on a widely publicized renovation program.

- Community

There is no evidence that teacher training as such has done much for the communities, but in conjunction with the actions of directors it may become a factor. Focus groups held with parents revealed an increased awareness that curriculum and teaching methods had been reformed and that EDUCA-trained teachers represented a new wave in Dominican education.

One of the visible consequences at the community level is the active competition among schools for the newly trained teachers, and the use of the "reformed teachers" asset to attract new clients. Both have the positive effect of exposing an increasing proportion of students to reformed teaching.

3.4 Achievement tests

Designing, testing, and implementing a system of achievement testing is a major, specialized, and difficult undertaking. It was thought to be worth the effort within PIPE because "the ultimate test of PIPE's success is the extent to which student performance has improved" (Project Paper, p. 43). The 1995 version of project benchmarks stated a target of 70,000 tests applied. This target has been surpassed considerably since by 1997, 87,450 tests have been applied and reported on.

Testing is one of the areas where the PIPE example set the stage for large-scale implementation by the Ministry. Standardized achievement tests had, of course, been part of the Plan Decenal from the beginning (UNESCO 1993: 20), but like so many other parts of the Plan were slow to be implemented. PIPE retained ASISA to design, test, and carry out the testing program.

² There are many examples of successful achievement testing that can be adapted to local conditions and reform efforts. It is also worth mentioning that EDUCA sponsored extensive qualitative analysis (classroom observation) by ASISA in an evaluation of the RADECO project. On that occasion the testers did constitute a repertory of variables that could have been covered again, in later tests. Even EDUCA's own files contain a certain coverage of teacher training variables such as level of initial training, type of in-service training, fields covered and manuals used, and the like. Such variables should now be related to student achievement. However, it appears that ASISA was never asked to perform this type of analysis.

Through advice on content and methodology as well as through training of SEEBAC personnel,³ the expertise thus accumulated by that firm was instrumental in improving the national testing program.

The reporting on tests is almost exclusively limited to descriptive analysis. Mean achievements are reported by school (enormous differences), sex (virtually no difference), age (negative correlation), and school type (private schools seem to outperform public schools). Overall the implementation of the tests has been competent and professional, but several problems do exist that make the interpretation of the results difficult. Trip reports and correspondence between EDUCA and the technical assistant (TA) responsible for testing show that certain problems have surfaced. Most importantly, the TA pointed out as early as 1993 that the degree of implementation of the various aspects of the Reform should be documented and used in explaining test outcomes. In a highly standardized and efficient school system this might not be an issue, but in a decentralized system with widely varying levels of input, it is critical to document the degrees of implementation. Doing otherwise can lead to gross misinterpretation of findings. To give just one example how can we assess the impact of a new textbook on student learning if we don't know whether teachers and/or students actually used this new textbook. Taking the word of administrators is not good enough in such a matter: only empirical verification will do. The following is a partial list of problems that make the interpretation of the test results difficult.⁴

Problems with the tests themselves:

- Tests did not always cover the material that had been taught. Teachers frequently skip chapters and topics that may subsequently be covered by a test.
- Tests sometimes asked about material that had been taught in ways at odds with the new curriculum.
- Post-test materials were significantly harder than pre-test materials, for both teachers and students. One would have to expect declining scores even when students had made considerable progress.

Problems with the variables covered:

- Achievement tests usually respond to a great variety of variables, which makes it difficult to attribute causality to results. The essential minimum of variables was not covered (e.g., whether students had books, were healthy, had eaten; whether teachers had training, manuals, textbooks or just the "compendio", etc.).

³ Not all of the advice was heeded by the Ministry. e.g., it appears that the Ministry is limiting itself to the application of criterion-referenced tests when the thrust of its Reform would suggest norm-referenced tests.

⁴ Many of the same problems are found in the SEEBAC tests.

- There is no evidence of school level, teacher level, and student level variables having been integrated into a single file. Teacher level variables can, therefore, not be invoked in explaining student performance.

Problems with the analysis:

- The reporting on three levels (ASISA to EDUCA; EDUCA to AID- D.R.; AID-D.R. to AID-Washington) suggests that not only had the children in EDUCA-sponsored schools not progressed, they had actually regressed. Such a suggestion can neither be verified nor falsified by current levels of reporting and analysis.
- Many of the most important results of the pedagogical renewal were not tested (e.g., autonomy and self-confidence). What lends itself best to testing is what can also be learned by rote, without any reformed pedagogy.
- It is always a bit difficult to analyze tests of materials that are not fully understood by those responsible for teaching and testing. ASISA had SEEBAC technicians answer 4th grade tests and found that they frequently did not know the correct answers themselves. This reinforces the impression that children may have been tested on materials neither their teachers nor their superiors fully understood.

Given these concerns, it might be best to forget about the supposedly low performance of EDUCA schools on achievement tests, and to start a more complete analysis of the test data. Of course, there is a need to make sure that future tests will cover the variables needed for an adequate interpretation of the results.

3.5 Textbooks and other materials

Textbook development is another area where PIPE has made a significant contribution to implementing the Reform on a national scale, by developing new Mathematics and Spanish textbooks and workbooks that were subsequently distributed throughout SEEBAC schools. Ministry officials, school directors, and teachers have universally pointed to the high quality of the content of EDUCA books and materials (even though occasionally criticizing paper quality and distribution problems).

Both the Project Paper and the original cooperative agreement were curiously silent about the quantities of books to be distributed, but a later amendment corrected this omission (USAID 1995). EDUCA surpassed the amendment's targets in every respect:

	Target	Implementation
Textbook development	7th, 8th	7th, 8th, 3rd, 4th
Book distribution	140,000	114,444 + 36,000
Dictionaries	1,300	1,517
Encyclopedias/Training mat.	1,800	6,020

EDUCA's activities in the areas of textbooks and other teaching supplies, which have been on target, on schedule, and of high quality, are generally appreciated. One aspect that was of particular importance here was that the institutions contracted for training of school personnel also provided excellent service in this area: their EDUCA-sponsored training materials were always ready on time and could be put to good use.⁵

3.6 Management Information System

The Project Paper stated that "development and management of an MIS relevant to primary education is required if EDUCA is to accomplish its major functions" (p. 45), these major functions presumably being service delivery and—according to the Cooperative Agreement—advocacy. Fortunately, the authors of the Project Paper have been proven wrong. EDUCA has accomplished its major functions successfully even though the MIS component is still incomplete, fragile, and of limited use.

The system is incomplete in that some of the most important data files on schools, teachers, and student performance are either still in the data input stage or not yet related in an integrated data base. It is fragile in that only two EDUCA staff are competent in handling and using it, both of whom are financed under the presently expiring PIPE project. It is of limited use for three reasons: (a) all of the significant research work (e.g., the two school censuses and the achievement tests) has been performed on other systems; (b) there is no evidence that either the selection of EDUCA activities or the targeting of service delivery were arrived at through MIS-based analysis; and (c) no significant two-way data exchanges between EDUCA and SEEBAC have so far taken place. These three points had been the major elements justifying the MIS component in the Project Paper.

This is not to say that EDUCA's MIS does not have potential. The computers are good (though they have only been installed for a few months), the software appears appropriate (though the Local Area Network (LAN) is not functioning), and the two EDUCA staff are clearly competent (though their research capacity cannot be fully mobilized at this point). Had a simple MIS been put in place five years ago, it might have been of great use. However, it is doubtful whether a complex system, completed during the final months of the project, will be of much use beyond the duration of PIPE.

The following are some further observations concerning the MIS:

- The objective was to install a complete, flexible system supplying all EDUCA staff for their data needs on a daily basis. This was far from realized at the time of the midterm evaluation and will likely not be achieved by the end of PIPE. In hindsight we can say

⁵ However, the copying of some of the readings used in the courses was of substandard quality—and regularly criticized by the teachers and directors in training.

that the objective was unrealistic and the system, fortunately, much less essential than had been anticipated.

- Installing an MIS of great capacity and complexity saddles a project with high recurrent costs (in computer maintenance, staff training, updating of software and data files). Once the project's activities and funding level change, EDUCA will find it hard to justify very high, MIS-related expenditures.
- To generate much use, such a system needs to establish and maintain a track record of useful analysis with both insiders and outsiders. At this point this has not been achieved.
- Continued monitoring and evaluation are among the most critical aspects of project implementation. They are also among the key functions of any MIS, but their performance is dependent on timely updating of information. So far the updating at EDUCA has been slow, the data—especially the data on schools and teachers—incomplete, and the integration of data cumbersome. PIPE monitoring and evaluation has been good, but not because of the MIS.
- Unless EDUCA continues some sort of service delivery to the schools of the Distrito Nacional, the data flow into the MIS is unlikely to continue. Within 12-24 months the data files will become obsolete since schools are undergoing frequent changes in size, staffing, and services performed.
- There has been no useful cross-fertilization and data exchange with SEEBAC. Ministry officials are courteous but it is clear that they don't want the EDUCA files, don't need them, and probably have no way of integrating them into their own system.

4. The PIPE contribution to Dominican education

EDUCA's advocacy has furthered the cause of Dominican education to an extent that is impossible to measure but universally thought to be significant. The case is different for EDUCA's service delivery under PIPE. In purely quantitative terms, during its five years of operation (1992-1997), PIPE has done the following:

- provided in-service training to roughly 4,000 teachers or close to 10 percent of the national total;
- trained 800 school directors or roughly 10 percent of the national total—or close to one half of all directors of the National District;
- in all likelihood, provided more subsidized and free books and learning materials than any other NGO, at least during the peak years 1993 and 1994; and

- designed, tested, and implemented the largest initiative in standardized tests in the country and thereby contributed to the national testing program.

Besides these major quantifiable achievements financed under PIPE, EDUCA has a number of other programs to its credit, most notably a school adoption program ("apadrinamiento"), and a national culture program. EDUCA also contributed to a distance education program called RADECO, and the production of a Dominican school dictionary. All of these have produced quantifiable results (EDUCA 1997).

In addition, some indirect benefits from PIPE should also be mentioned:

- The PIPE operation was very large, compared to EDUCA's other projects during the past few years. PIPE made possible a large number of actions and exchanges that EDUCA would not have had otherwise.
- EDUCA started out as an agency of public advocacy. PIPE added concrete budgets and material outputs, which added credibility to the advocacy, at least among those parts of the education system that were recipients of such largesse.
- Increasing the scale of the teacher training operations meant that the country now has an enlarged stock of trainers, experience, and pedagogical materials, all of which can be used in the continuation of the reform effort.
- Some of the EDUCA actions are recognized as models of how things could work, e.g., one CAN produce textbooks of high quality in a short period of time, one CAN distribute them at the beginning of the school year, and one SHOULD train the entire staff of a school, beginning with the director.

However, we should not expect PIPE to have any measurable impact beyond the project's schools. Even within the smaller universe of PIPE schools we should not expect any uniform impact since the project affected schools to widely varying degrees. Only a careful research design (e.g., of matched pairs of schools) will be able to distinguish the PIPE contribution from that of other agents within the large-scale effort of educational reform.

Much of PIPE's impact has been too diffuse to be pinned down with precision, but has been real nevertheless. Participants in the focus groups gave moving testimony of how the project changed their lives, their teaching, and the character of their schools. Some of them went so far as to speak of two entirely different epochs: the time of decline, inefficiency, and frustration "before EDUCA;" and the time of hope, new vision, and concrete assistance "since EDUCA."

5. Looking back and ahead: challenges for Dominican education

There are four major challenges for Dominican basic education: keeping pace with rapid population increase; increasing the efficiency of the school system; increasing school quality; and financing public education.

5.1 Population increase

There has been a dramatic improvement in Dominican demographic indicators over the last two decades. For example, the total fertility rate has declined from 5.2 to 3.2 (CESDEM 1997). Nevertheless, there will be increasing cohorts of children reaching school age for many years to come. Children of basic education age (6-13 years old) numbered 1.44 million in 1995, but there will be close to 1.76 million of them by 2005. One thousand new classrooms and 5,300 new teachers will have to be found, trained, and paid for each year from now on until 2005, simply to keep up with demographic growth, without any improvements in system performance.⁶ Such a monumental effort is justified only if the system, at the same time, can be made more efficient.

5.2 Improving internal efficiency

The Dominican school system is not very efficient at this time but some improvements have recently been made. Between 1991/2 and 1995/6 the dropout rate has been reduced from 6.9 percent to 5.3 percent, and the repetition rate from 9.0 percent to 6.8 percent. But it still takes over six student/years to produce one 4th grade graduate, and only about 25 percent of all basic education students will ever complete grade 8. This has some significant effects:

- Large numbers of children drop in and out of the first few grades several times, only to leave the system as functional illiterates.
- A large part of the entire system—teachers, classrooms, and supplies—is wasted on children who will never get very far, let alone graduate.
- Overaged children make up a large proportion of the classes, thereby depressing average learning outcomes⁷ and reducing pedagogical efficiency.⁸

One of the principal ingredients of a more efficient school—one that produces more and better graduates per student/year—is school quality.

5.3 Improving school quality

Most Dominican children do have access to schools; the problem is that many schools offer only limited chances to learn and move ahead. Many reform efforts, such as those of the PIPE project,

⁶ This estimate is based on the assumptions that the teacher/student ratio remains constant at about 30, that 10 percent of all teachers leave the profession each year, and that the total number of teachers in 1995 was 40,000. It differs from an estimate heard in World Bank circles (i.e., 2,500 new teachers per year) because that institution uses what we think are overly optimistic assumptions. But these are differences in magnitude only (5,600/year as compared to 2,500/year), not in core content. Both estimates tell us essentially that an enormous effort is required if we are to move beyond demographic expansion to an improvement of the system. Compared to our imprecise but realistic figures, the Second World Bank Project (1995: page 8 and 40) reads like an optimistic fairy tale. It assumes a need to upgrade a total of only 5,000 teachers over ten years.

⁷ The EDUCA test results show a consistently negative correlation between student age and performance.

⁸ Pedagogical efficiency increases with classroom homogeneity.

have, therefore, focused on improving school quality. They try to improve and increase material inputs (e.g., textbook supplies), teacher quality (via selection and training), teaching practices (by applying modern pedagogical principles), and school structure (e.g., by more participatory school management involving teachers and parents). All of this has been found to have positive effects on learning outcomes, but to very different degrees.

Improving school quality is slow, costly, and difficult work but compared to other approaches—such as universal access—it is rapid and cost effective. Some PIPE schools are living examples of dramatic change in school quality leading to greater internal efficiency and much higher graduation rates—and this after only about five years of effort.

5.4 Financing basic education

After many years of neglect, public financing of basic education has improved markedly since 1991. Since then, the proportion of government spending on education is reputed to have risen from 8.5 percent to 16 percent of the budget. Private investment in education is also significant and rising; it represents at least 25 percent of total investment at the primary level and 40 percent at the secondary level (World Bank 1995: 39).

Such increased commitment can only be maintained if certain conditions are fulfilled, such as continued strong advocacy for high levels of educational spending, a string of successes satisfying parents and politicians alike, and continued major foreign donor commitment to the education sector. All of these appear to be within reach, and there is every reason to hope that the next five years will bring significant improvements in basic education.

6. What education is all about

Education is not an aim in itself but "a cornerstone of economic and social development; primary education is its foundation" (Lockheed et al 1991:1).

6.1 Economic development

Research and experience demonstrate that an educated labour force is a necessary condition for economic development. Across countries, the correlation between national investment in education and economic growth is striking. Educated workers have much higher productivity and incomes than other workers. The Dominican Republic is a perfect example of this. The country falls into the "low-medium" categories of both educational and economic development, and among its population there is a powerful correlation between educational and economic status.

On the latter point, the question of cause and effect is critical: does education lead to prosperity or is the causality reversed in that education is simply a privilege of the prosperous? There is no simple answer to this question but some points can be taken to be proven:

- Public investment in primary education will make access more equitable and increase the social mobility chances of the poor.
- Where demand for education is high, as it is in the D.R., supply side investments (e.g., in teachers, books, and facilities) will increase equity and equality.
- Modern participatory pedagogical techniques have great potential in equalizing the learning process.

In these aspects as in many others, the Plan Decenal is right on target. There is no better way of general economic advancement than to implement the reforms contained in the Plan. Along the Plan's lines, education will indeed help the poor more than the rich.

6.2 Social development

The cognitive competencies acquired in school are more than just tools for prosperity; they have a significant impact on social development. Recent Dominican evidence can prove this point.

Reduced fertility: Rapid population growth has in the past made raising the standard of living difficult, and an increasingly large number of young people, especially in the rural areas, have received little education or none at all, making economic development even more difficult. Reducing fertility rates has, therefore, been an important part of development programs; it depends heavily on educating women. According to the recent DHS survey (ENDESA-96) the average number of children Dominican women currently have is 3.2, with a high of 5.0 for women without formal education and a low of 1.9 for women who have been to university. Every four years of education completed reduces the total fertility rate by about 0.7.

Child nutrition: All three measures of child malnutrition improve dramatically with mother's education. Overall, the children of women in the bottom educational category have at least 15 times the probability of being malnourished, compared to those of women in the top category. Completing primary school reduces the most severe forms of child malnutrition by a factor of three.

Maternal nutrition: Education level is correlated with mother's nutrition. Women without schooling have four times the probability of being undernourished than women who have some higher education.⁹

Political attitudes: Political authoritarianism is generally related to extreme levels of economic inequality and low economic development. The change from a centralized and authoritarian system to a more decentralized, democratic and participatory system is, therefore, not only an

⁹ Using the Body Mass Index as a measure we find a clear, linear relationship. Even a minimal amount of primary schooling is related to a significant improvement in nutritional status (ENDESA 1996: Table 9.10). Mother's nutrition, in turn, affects children's birth weight, morbidity, and mortality.

important part of social development but frequently also a prerequisite for economic development. There is recent evidence in the Dominican Republic (as elsewhere) that less authoritarian and less submissive attitudes are gaining ground and that they are greatly furthered by education.

The DEMOS-94 study found that avowed interest in political matters doubled with increasing education and that authoritarian attitudes declined by over 50 percent. Playing devil's advocate we can, of course, question the validity of these results. Is it not true that high fertility, malnutrition, and authoritarianism are typical of rural populations and of the poor? Is it not also true that urban populations have much better access to education? Maybe the social development we are talking about is not due to education at all, but to urbanization or higher economic status.

This issue can be resolved by statistically controlling the effects of urban living and economic status. Our findings leave no doubt as to the impact of education on authoritarian attitudes. Education remains by far the strongest factor in authoritarianism, making the other variables almost disappear. A similar multi-variate analysis confirms the strong impact of education on fertility and child nutrition as well. Education is indeed a key factor in social development.

7. In retrospect: was PIPE well designed and successful?

The information used in this evaluation has come from three main sources: personal interviews (see list of persons interviewed), written materials (see bibliography); and focus groups with school directors, teachers, and parents. Based on what we have learned through these means, what can we conclude concerning the PIPE project design? We structure our conclusions around the project's most significant and most original design features.

- **Focusing on school quality and internal efficiency, rather than access, in order to achieve the desired increase in educational levels.**

We conclude that the focus on school quality has been appropriate. There is enormous waste in a school system where most children never graduate and many remain functional illiterates. Improving school quality will make it possible to graduate twice as many students without adding a single classroom or teacher. It is gratifying to see that the second World Bank/IDB project shares this view, projecting to double the graduation rate to 52 percent, by the year 2000.

- **Working through an NGO rather than through established government agencies.**

We conclude that EDUCA has performed admirably as an instrument of service delivery, in addition to being a tireless advocate for education in the public arena. There is no evidence suggesting that a governmental agency would have performed as well or better than EDUCA, given the same resources. The level of motivation, the efficiency, and the flexibility of a solid NGO are hard to match in the public sector. In addition, managing the PIPE project has greatly

added to EDUCA's funding level, prestige, and visibility. Working through this NGO has contributed to the general effort of empowering civil society and obtaining a heightened and continuing commitment to basic education on the part of government.

- **Including public sector schools rather than concentrating on private schools alone, as one might have expected from this NGO.**

We conclude that EDUCA has done well to deliver services of various kinds to the Ministry and public schools. Teachers and directors of the public and private sectors have learned to listen to each other, to respect each other, and in many cases to help each other within their neighborhoods. EDUCA's legitimacy as an advocate for national education would have been diminished had it been no more than a lobby for private schools. The Ministry might never have followed EDUCA's lead (in textbooks, school adoption, and testing) unless the NGO had established itself as a credible and competent partner by paying attention to the plight of public sector schools.

- **Linking up with ongoing efforts of educational renewal, rather than inventing programs and institutions.**

We conclude that USAID did well to design a program that made the most of existing experiences and institutions. EDUCA and the training institutions were all ready to move, as part of an enormous wave of educational renewal which in the 1980s was sweeping the Caribbean and indeed many parts of the developing world. Having helped to unite all of civil society behind the Plan Decenal is one of EDUCA's great merits. Such unification behind a single purpose is a singular opportunity to mobilize existing motivation and energy. USAID, through PIPE, decided to seize that opportunity rather than inventing something else, and today the agency has no reason to regret its choice.

- **Subcontracting all major activities to local institutions rather than attempting to implement directly.**

We conclude that subcontracting turned out to be the right way of implementing service delivery. It allowed EDUCA to stay small and concentrate on its unifying and advocacy roles without being bogged down in the burdensome detail of administration. EDUCA did what it was competent to do while the contracted firms and institutions did what they are best at, be it training or testing or analyzing management structures.

As a general conclusion we can state that overall the PIPE design was sound and allowed the project to reach and surpass its objectives and targets. The one component which has not yet been successfully completed has turned out to be less essential than had been thought originally. EDUCA has had the depth, the flexibility and the support which have let it carry out its functions even in the absence of a fully functioning MIS.

ANNEX B INTERVIEWS

USAID

Marilyn Zak, Director
Leo Garza, Deputy-Director
Brian Rudert, SO 1 Team Leader
Thelma Camarena, Education Specialist
Patricia Hernandez, Controller
Charlotte Bench, Microenterprise Specialist
Paul Struharik, Educacion Officer, retired

EDUCA

Board of Directors

Luis Sanchez Noble, President
Gustavo Tavares, former President
Luis Herredia Bonetti, former President
Antonio Espin, First Vice President
Salvador Demallistre, Second Vice President
Giovanni D'Allesandro, Director

Advisors

Juan Thomas Tavares, Businessman
Rafael Toribio, INTEC
Rhadames Mejia, PUCMM
Francisco Polanco, PUCMM
Arelis Rodriguez, Executive Director Falconbridge Foundation
Julio De Castro, Professor, University of Colorado

Consultant

Jacqueline Malagon, Director of APEC, former Executive Director of
EDUCA and former Minister of Education

Personnel

Aida Consuelo Hernandez, PIPE Project Director/Executive Director of EDUCA
Liliana Degiorgis, MIS
Dominicana de Martinez, Curriculum Specialist

Rafael Mendez, Computer Engineer

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ligia Amado Melo, Minister of Education

Josefina Pimental, Vice-Minister of Education for Teaching Affairs

Ernesto Berroa, Director of Statistics Department

Jose Espallat, School Mapping

Juan Lugo, Statistics Department

ACADEMIA

Rafael Toribio, Rector of Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC) *

Rhadames Mejia, Vice-Rector of Pontificia Universidad Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) *

Francisco Polanco, Director of Academic Affairs at PUCMM *

Daniela Franco, Vice-Rector of Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña (UNPHU)

Alfredo Abel, Director of Education Department at UNPHU

Sandra y Nurys Gonzales, INTEC

Jose Disla, Director of Education Department, Universidad Autónoma Santo Domingo (UASD)

Cristina Molinda, Director of EDUCA/PIPE Program, UASD

Ivon Grullon, Dean of the Humanities Department, UASD

Alina Castillo, Assistant to EDUCA/PIP Program, UASD

CHURCH

Cardinal Nicolas de Jesus Lopez Rodriguez, Catholic Church

Braulio Portes, Evangelical Church

PRIVATE SECTOR

Jose Manuel Paliza, former President of the Consejo Nacional de la Empresa Privada (CONEP)

Frank Castillo, Executive Director of CONEP

Antonio Isa Conde, President of Privatization Committee/Formal President of the Asociación de Empresas Industriales de Herrera

LABOR

Melanio Paredes, former Secretary of the Asociación Dominicana de Profesores (ADP)

Nelsida Marmolejos, former General Secretary of the Central de Trabajadores Unitarios (CTU)

POLITICAL PARTIES

Milagros Ortiz Bosch, Senator Partido Revolucionario Dominicano/former Minister of Education
Nicolas Almanzar, Partido Reformista Social Cristiano/former Minister of Education
Ligia Amado Melo, Partido de la Libracion Dominicana/Minister of Education *

MASS MEDIA

Juan Bolivar Diaz, Channel 2
Bienvenido Alvarez, Hoy
Lourdes Bonelly de Espaillat, Listin

PRIVATE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

David Scott Luther, President of Alianza ONG
Mu Kien San Bangh, Executive Director of PIC Program/PUCMM
Magali Caram, Director of Profamilia
Josefina Zaiter, Centro Poveda
Padre Jorge Sela, Director of Centro Montalvo

DONOR AGENCIES

Augusto Ruiz, IDD Santo Domingo
Pedro Saenz, IDD Washington
Ramon Flores, IDB/SEEBAC
Eleanor Schreiber, World Bank Washington
Elkyn Chaparro, World Bank Washington
Carolyn Stremlau, Banyon Tree Foundation

OTHER

Ladys Ortiz, Profamilia analyst
Nelson Ramirez, Profamilia analyst
Frank Moya Pons, Historian

ANNEX C
LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Accion para la Educacion Basica, Inc. (EDUCA)

EDUCA

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- 1992 Propuesta para optar por el premio "Brugal Cree en Su Gente."
- 1993 Programa de entrenamiento de profesores. Módulo recursos didácticos.
- 1994 Creating Educational Partnership in the Caribbean. An interview with Jacqueline Malagon, Minister of Education.
- 1995 Una aventura aquí mismo.
- 1995 Testimonio de agradecimiento.
- 1995 Request for Proposal for design and implementation of an MIS, and proposals received from RIMASOFT and MEMORI, S.A.
- 1995 RFP for school data gathering in Santo Domingo, and proposals from Asesores Asociados, S.A. and CESDEM; contract and reports by CESDEM.
- 1996 Aprendo 96. 2ndo seminario internacional de educación básica. Conferencias, charlas y mini-talleres.
- 1996 Recursos humanos—la clave del desarrollo y de la competitividad.
- 1996 Semi-annual report #7 (October 1995 to March 1996).
- 1996 Semi-annual report #8 (April to September 1996).
- 1996 Materials supplied by SAESA in performance of a contract for administrative reorganization of the EDUCUA office.
- 1997 Semi-annual report #9 (October 1996 to March 1997).
- n.d. (1997; no title) Description of EDUCUA and its programs.

n.d. Propuesta: Generación de una cultura participativa y democrática en las comunidades educativas de la zonas de Herrera y Los Tres Brazos.

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(various dates)

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Other Institutions

Academy for Educational Development (AED)

1995 Final Report: Private Initiatives in Primary Education (PIPE). Washington, DC: AED.

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ASISA (EDUCA/PIPE)

1996 Informe de resultados de la administración de pruebas de aprovechamiento en Español y Matemáticas, 1995-1996. Santo Domingo: ASISA.

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1996 US\$52 Millones del BID para Educación Básica.

Centro de estudios sociales y demograficos (CESDEM)

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MSI (Management Systems International)

1995 Dominican Republic PVO Cofinancing Project 517-0247: Mid term evaluation. Washington, D.C.: MSI.

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