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Educational Quality Improvement Program
Classrooms • Schools • Communities

EXCELL Project First Annual Report
JULY 2003 – JUNE 2004



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First Project Annual Performance Report: July 2003 – June 2004

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Executive summary

The "Excellence in Classroom Education at the Local Level" (EXCELL) Project has been designed to address educational priorities in El Salvador and improve student performance in 250 rural schools, grades K-6. Operating between July 2003 and June 2005 the Project's interventions are directed at developing principals' abilities to lead efforts to improve quality in education, strengthen mid-level management capacity in the Ministry of Education (MOE) in support of school principals, strengthen the MOE's capacity to process and use information about quality in education and improve production, availability and use of education research for policy decision-making in this sector.

The Project is structured in three components. *Component 1* seeks to strengthen the Ministry of Education's capacity to improve decentralized school management and modify and implement educational reforms through two sub-components. Sub-Component 1.1 develops strategic planning and management capacity and Sub-Component 1.2 applies monitoring and evaluation systems and research. *Component 2* is designed to improve learning conditions for student achievement in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals. *Component 3* seeks to extend educational policy research.

Among the tasks completed during the Project's first year are the Project's conceptual, methodological and operative design, the Project's office and team setup, the design and initial implementation of its three components and the design and initial implementation of its monitoring and evaluation and cost-sharing strategies.

The Project underwent two major revisions in its first year of operation, responding to MOE wishes for greater direct involvement and to a budget reduction due to global policy issues in USAID, respectively. As per the final work plan, the Project's operation between July 2003 and June 2004 covered tasks in Sub-Component 1.1, including the identification of institutional development needs in mid-level management and addressing these through the mid-level management assistance plan and preparation of training materials for this group. Tasks planned in Component 1.2 included conducting an information needs and uses study, identifying tools and systems used by the MOE in managing information about quality in education and developing a plan for their improvement, completing terms of reference, bidding and beginning implementation of hardware and software acquisitions for the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation, and conducting a study on management and quality in education.

Component 2 plans included recruiting and training a team of six Departmental Quality Facilitators and six Quality Assistants to provide support in training, Quality Reflection Circles and in-school Technical Assistance; promoting and disseminating information about the project with MOE personnel both nationally and locally through presentations, workshops and documents; establishing and using regular communication mechanisms with MOE personnel at the national and local levels; organizing 18 school principal Quality Reflection Circles; developing a training and technical assistance plan based on information about the principals and schools being served; implementing that plan through project personnel and learning materials, training and technical assistance subcontractors; adapting and/or developing materials for use in principal training and technical assistance; and completing and validating the monitoring and evaluation tools for the component.

1 Defined as a study of the situation and response to special education needs.

For this year Component 3 plans included developing a study on equity and quality in education, defining a research agenda with five topics based on a national education policy forum and conducting a first research workshop to discuss research methods for these topics.

Management activities planned for this year included project office and team setup, organizing the project consultative group and holding monthly sessions, presenting and promoting the project with education sector agents and other projects, developing a cost-share strategy and the project Performance Monitoring Plan and instruments.

This document details inputs and outputs for each of the tasks and activities covered between July 2003 and June 2004, as well as the achievement of quarterly performance targets. For Sub-Component 1.1 this included identifying MOE training needs for Mid-Level Managers, available providers of training and preparing and validating the Mid-Level Management Training and Technical Assistance Plan. Implementation of this Plan was postponed due to project redesign and changes in MOE authorities.

Component 1.2 results included the preparation of a Diagnosis of Special Education Needs based on existing information, the acquisition and installation of a high-volume scanner, technical assistance in database development and training in statistical processing and analysis for DNME personnel. An Information Uses and Needs study was prepared, to be delivered July 2004.

Results in Component 2 included profiling all 250 principals and their schools, completing the organization and operation of principal Quality Reflection Circles in all six departments covered by the project, completing, validating and implementing the principal training and technical assistance plan, including three monthly training sessions, at least four quality circle sessions and at least two in-school technical assistance visits for each principal, completing the component's baseline study (to be delivered July 2004) and preparing and distributing training materials in support of training and technical assistance provided. Training and Technical assistance was originally conceived to be provided by externally contracted local universities and other organizations. However, this was not possible due to insufficient response and a variety of operational and contractual restrictions.

Results in Component 3 included conducting a national Education Policy Forum, preparing a research agenda, conducting a study of quality in education and equity, and definition of terms of reference for a national teacher profile study. The dissemination of Policy Forum Results through a professional-grade publication, as well as the draft document for the education and equity study which is currently being discussed with the MOE.

Overall lessons gained from the Project's first year of implementation cover issues such as the importance of careful program design, detailed promotion and sensitization for successful implementation, the need to maintain realistic expectations for a two-year project, the innovative and effective nature of the training - reflection - technical assistance model developed by the project for principal management training and the significance of Pedagogical Innovation Projects as a means to ensure linking of the three stages of this model, the need to maintain ongoing communication and coordination with MOE counterparts at all levels, the challenges posed by geographical coding of the project, the importance of streamlining management structures in a short project, the upcoming need for project team redesign to adapt to changes in the project as it moves from initial design and setup into full-blown implementation, the significance of thinking about the project in the context of USAID long term strategies, rather than just of its own timeline.

and the importance of implementing complementary activities for principals, pedagogical advisors and teachers and of deepening in-school technical assistance.

1 Project summary

The "Excellence in Classroom Education at the Local Level" (EXCELL) Project has been designed to address educational priorities in El Salvador and improve student performance in 250 rural schools, grades K-6. Based on the evidence from international literature on the strategic role of principals in school effectiveness, between July 2003 and June 2005 the Project's interventions will be directed at developing principals' abilities to lead quality in education improvement efforts in schools, strengthen mid-level management capacity in the Ministry of Education (MOE) in support of school principals, strengthen the MOE's capacity to process and use information about quality in education and improve production, availability and use of education research for policy decision-making in this sector.

The Project has been structured in three components, as follows.

Component 1. Strengthen the Ministry of Education's capacity to improve decentralized school management and modify and implement educational reforms.
This component is divided into two sub-components.

Sub-Component 1.1 Strategic planning and management capacity development.

Sub-Component 1.2 Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research.

Component 2. Improve learning conditions for student achievement in at least 250 rural schools, K-6, through training and technical assistance to school principals.

Component 3. Extend educational policy research.

The Project contributes to the MOE's work in the context of USAID/El Salvador Mission's Strategic Objective 1 (Expanded access and economic opportunity for El Salvador's rural poor families).

The Project's conceptual framework builds on a quality in education model that brings together multiple elements such as teacher training, school infrastructure, curricula, textbooks, teacher performance, educational resources, school management, principal leadership, school climate, time used on academic tasks, among others, within which the principal's role in quality in education within the school is a necessary, albeit insufficient factor. Education is developed with an integrated focus and excellence in the classroom makes evident the system's development. The Project seeks coherence with MOE initiatives such as the Escuela 10 Program and the quality in education model it espouses, the use of tools such as the Strategic Institutional Plan (PEI), as well as the mobilization of inputs from other cooperation agencies in support of the MOE. Additionally, the Project develops a focus seeking to proactively address inequities in access to education due to discrimination for reasons such as gender, socio-economic circumstances and different educational needs.

Among the tasks intended to be completed during the Project's first year were the Project's conceptual, methodological and operative design, the Project's material and human setup, the design and initial implementation of its three components and the design and initial implementation of its monitoring and evaluation and cost-sharing strategies.

The Project is being developed through a strategy that includes strengthening leadership, integrated teambuilding, professional development (understood as co-responsibility between personnel (in this case managers and principals) and the institution) for professionalization, organic inclusion of the Project's activities within the MOE's processes and systems, affirmative action as a way to address inequities deriving from diversity, strengthening knowledge-based activities and developing a systems perspective. This strategy has been formalized through a model for support to principals seeking to take assistance and training to the place and circumstances of principals' work; a model for support to mid-level management focused on pedagogical processes as the strategic object of management in the sector and on competencies for a positive organizational climate and effective problem solving as its means; a model for support to research based on favoring the diffusion of results and decision-making in public policy, with a methodological preference for action research as a way to obtain critical constructive thought by the agents of educational reform themselves and build knowledge on practice, linking educational processes with human development; and a model supporting monitoring and evaluation in the MOE as a fundamental tool for institutional learning.

The Project is managed through a multidisciplinary team bringing together capacities in institutional and management strengthening, pedagogical development, education policy, training and materials development methods, educational research and action research. This team is set in its own administrative framework and maintains a network of strategic links through a Technical Follow-up group with the MOE and USAID, an informal consultative group for the identification of information, experience and resources that may strengthen the Project, and ongoing communications between EQUIPI consortium member organizations to ensure a fluid and efficient performance in the field. The Project's management framework is completed with a monitoring strategy that allows for the monthly recovery of information for adjustment through communication with the MOE and USAID, and a cost-sharing strategy that seeks to mobilize resources in complement of USAID's financing, both nationally and locally.

2 Technical activities during the reporting period

In its first year of implementation the Project underwent two major revisions. The first of these, which responded to the MOE's wish for greater direct involvement, occurred in the fourth quarter of calendar year 2003 (October - December) and came into effect in the following quarter. The second revision was due to a budget reduction of approximately 18% derived from global budgetary constraints in USAID. This revision occurred in the second first quarter of calendar year 2004 (January - March) and came into effect in the last quarter of the project's first year (April - June 2004). A summary by component is presented here of the activities defined for the year, as these were finally defined.

In Component 1 (Strengthen Ministry of Education's capacity to improve decentralized school management, modify and implement educational reforms), Sub-Component 1.1 (Strategic planning and management capacity development) included completing a mid-level management assistance plan based on the identification of institutional development needs in mid-level management and beginning its implementation in support to the PEI (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*) as part of tasks 1.1.1 (build a professional development strategy for mid-level managers); completing an assessment of materials available for mid-level management training and technical assistance and beginning preparation and validation of additional materials and their application in training in task 1.1.2 (Develop T&A materials for mid-level management); selecting providers of mid-level management training and beginning training of mid-level managers in task 1.1.3 (training of mid-level managers).

For Sub-Component 1.2 (Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research) this year's program included identifying current uses and needs of information among

managers in the MOE and analyzing international experiences in using information for management in education as parts of tasks 1.2.1 (Identifying information needs identifying tools and systems used by the MOE in managing education quality information, developing a plan for their improvement and beginning its implementation by purchasing and installing hardware and/or software to strengthen data processing capacity in the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation in task 1.2.2 (Strengthening data processing capacity in the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation); and identifying, contracting and conducting one study on management and quality in education in task 1.2.3 (Deepen knowledge of management and quality).

Planned activities conducted in Component 2 (Improve conditions for learning for student achievement in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals) included identifying and training the Project's Quality Coordinators in task 2.1 (Identifying and training Quality Coordinators); designing a promotion strategy and implementing it locally at the regional and departmental levels by presenting the Project and discussing issues of quality in education and instructional leadership in regional presentations to MOE pedagogical advisors, identifying areas for joint work with other international cooperation agencies and projects and in regional pedagogical conferences as part of task 2.2 (Promoting and disseminating information about the EXCELL Project locally), establishing regular mechanisms for communication with the MOE and holding regular meetings with both centrally located and decentralized MOE personnel in task 2.3 (communication and coordination between the Project and its counterparts in the MOE); establishing and operating all principal Quality Reflection Circles in task 2.4 (organization, planning and operation of Quality Reflection Circles); completing the profiling of schools and principals being serviced by the project; completing and validating a training program for these schools (task 2.5 – design and implementation of a training and technical assistance program); beginning the development of pedagogical innovation projects in schools under task 2.6 (assist with the identification and assessment of professional development needs); completing the baseline study as part of task 2.7 (design and implementation of a Baseline Study); beginning the development and dissemination of training materials in task 2.8 (adapt/create learning materials); conducting training and technical assistance for principals in task 2.9 (provide training and technical assistance to school principals) and conducting monitoring of Component 2 in task 2.10 (Monitor technical assistance and training).

For this year, activities under Component 3 included conducting and beginning dissemination of the component's first study as defined in task 3.1 (conduct a study of equity and quality in education in El Salvador); establishing a Research Committee (RC with representatives from the MOE National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation and USAID, organizing and conducting a National Education Policy Forum and defining a research agenda with five topics in task 3.2 (Definition of research topics); and beginning the background research for the second study in task 3.3 (Conduct research).

Additional management activities this year included project office and team setup, holding a Project kick-off function, preparing the project's Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), monitoring tools and holding monthly monitoring sessions, organizing the consultative group and meeting on a monthly basis; beginning the implementation of the Project's cost-share strategy and preparing quarterly performance reports.

3 Inputs and outputs by component

This section presents inputs and outputs for each of the tasks and activities scheduled for the first year of Project implementation. For each activity, information for the first three quarters is summarized, as it has already been presented previously in the quarterly reports. When relevant, information for the fourth quarter is presented separately and color-coded. (☐: inputs, outputs and/or comments for April-June 2004)

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
Component 1: Strengthen Ministry of Education's capacity to improve decentralized school management, modify and implement educational reforms			
<i>Sub-component 1.1: Strategic planning and management capacity development</i>			
Task 1.1.1: Strengthening mid-level managers' capacities			
<i>Identifying institutional development needs in mid-level management supporting the PEI</i>	<i>Human resources training needs study conducted by MOE human resources office.</i>	<i>Training and technical assistance plan organizing courses within overall project framework according to strategic vision.</i>	
<i>Prepare assistance plans for mid management support to PEIs</i>	<i>Agreement reached with MOE counterparts to organize training needs already identified within a coherent personnel development plan. Additional information obtained by consultant through consultation with managers. List of mid-level managers who will participate provided by MOE counterpart.</i>	<i>Presented and validated with MOE authorities, national directors and other personnel.</i>	<i>List of participants currently under review.</i>
	Approved training and technical assistance plan. Change in MOE authorities and some personnel due to change of government.	Plan presented in formal kick-off ceremony. Start up delayed to ensure new authorities' buy-in. Plan presented to new authorities.	
Task 1.1.2: Develop T&A materials for mid-level Management			
<i>Assess specific T&A needs among mid-management</i>	<i>Existing documentation collected and evaluated by EXCELL training and materials specialist</i>	<i>Requirement for training material included in TORs for training provider.</i>	
<i>Prepare and validate materials</i>	Change in government authorities.	Activities delayed by consensus with USAID and MOE counterparts to ensure buy-in from new MOE authorities.	
<i>Disseminate materials</i>			
Task 1.1.3: Train mid-level managers			
<i>Select mid-level management training</i>	<i>List of potential providers compiled from MOE list and by EXCELL training and materials specialist</i>	<i>Short list of providers identified and contacted to be mobilized during the program.</i>	

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
providers	Mid-level management training and technical assistance plan. Proposal from FEPADE.	FEPADE tentatively pre-selected to implement modules I and II.	Activities delayed by consensus with USAID and MOE counterparts to ensure buy-in from new MOE authorities.
Deliver mid-level management training	Approval of training and technical assistance plan by MOE	Program endorsed by Minister.	Activities delayed by consensus with USAID and MOE counterparts to ensure buy-in from new MOE authorities.
Sub-Component 1.2: Application of monitoring and evaluation systems and research			
Task 1.2.1: Identify information needs			
Identifying current uses and needs of information among managers in the MOE	TORs approved by MOE and USAID Contractual limitations derived from project geographic code. International and national consultants mobilized directly.	International literature review and assessment of data and DNME studies according to CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model	Study on hold pending identification of technical consultant. Study completion pending results of interviews with MOE officials and school principals. To be completed July 2004.
Task 1.2.2: Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate's data processing and analysis capacity			
Prepare procurement terms for installation, training and maintenance Invite, select and contract providers Procure and install hardware and software	Information about National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation mid-term development plan. MOE specifications for high volume scanner and USAID guidelines and requirements for purchase.	Scanner installed and operating in the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate Data processing time improved and technical capacity strengthened	
Train personnel:	International consultant.	Personnel in DNME trained in general statistics, advanced statistics and data processing with software application.	
Task 1.2.3: Deepen knowledge of management and quality			
Identify study, prepare TORs and select researchers	Topic (special education needs) agreed upon with USAID and MIPED and TORs approved. Study results	Study report presented, validated and reviewed.	
Conduct study Disseminate study results			Programs to be disseminated through distribution of publications and dissemination activities with MOE and PLANIPED.

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
Component 2: Improve conditions for learning for student achievement in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals			
Task 2.1: Identify and train departmental quality facilitators			
Identify, select and contract Quality Facilitators	Support from EQUIP1 member organizations 50 Curricula from interested professionals	Six Quality Facilitators selected, who fulfill requirements in terms of training experience, availability and cost. Two replacements in the first year.	
Design and implement Quality Facilitator training	Talks by EXCELL, MOE and USAID personnel. Support in visits to MOE programs and schools.	Quality Facilitators recruited, and trained on project organization, MOE programs in rural schools and needs and main issues in quality in education.	Outstanding support was provided for training by MOE personnel and managers, both in the field and in national headquarters.
Conduct follow-up training			
Task 2.2: Promote and disseminate information about EXCELL locally			
Design promotion strategy			Improvements were incorporated, not only to the presentation but particularly to the Project's models and strategies on the basis of participants' comments.
Present project to Mid-Level Managers (workshop in SS)	MS PowerPoint® presentation. Presentation venue and equipment in MOE offices	Forty-five members of top and mid-level management in MOE San Salvador and regional team members in San Miguel, San Salvador and La Libertad informed about EXCELL.	To ensure adequate integration, presentation was made to managers not directly involved in the project as well as to those involved in it.
Present project to Technical Department Teams (regional)			
Sensitization workshops	MS PowerPoint® presentation about EXCELL Workshop program and resources Vacation time by parents and children	Pedagogical advisors, principals, teachers, parents and children in La Libertad, Chalatenango, Cuscatlan, Cabañanas, San Vicente and Usulután informed about EXCELL and with increased awareness about education quality, and roles and responsibilities in it.	Overall participation was enthusiastic and positive.
Meeting with international organizations	MS PowerPoint® presentation about EXCELL	Areas offering opportunities for overlap and matching identified with representatives from other projects and organizations.	
Regional meeting with coordinators and advisors		Technical and operational agreements with MINED regional and department-level personnel.	
Follow-up workshops (pedagogical conferences)	Workshop design Experiences by principals participating in EXCELL	Workshop designed and programmed and venues selected by consensus with MOE	Workshops rescheduled for end of July 2004 by MOE request.

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
Task 2.3: Communication and coordination between the Project and its counterparts in the MOE			
Meetings with MOE headquarters	Coordination needs identified overall for project with USAID officers, Minister and Vice-Minister and other USAID Projects EXCELL and MOE coordination needs for Component 2	Technical and operational agreements reached as needed. Meetings held on average bi-weekly for Component 2, on case by case basis for Components 1 and 3 and monthly with Minister, Vice-Minister USAID officers and other USAID projects.	Ongoing and fluid communications with MOE have become the norm.
Meetings with MOE decentralized offices	EXCELL and MOE coordination needs.	Meetings held on ad-hoc basis to resolve issues of coordination and arrange venues for QRC and training sessions	Ongoing and fluid communications with MOE, concerning EXCELL and other projects such as GETT and Project Zero.
Task 2.4: Organize principal Quality Reflection Circles (QRC)			
Establish QRCs	Implementation model for Component 2. Trained and inducted coordinator team. MOE request to focus Circles on Pedagogical issues	Three strategic quality circles organized as per plan.	
Design QRC plans		Agreement reached to organize training in circles around the preparation of a Pedagogical Innovation Project (PIP) in each school.	
Conduct QRC activities	QRC meeting schedule for the rest of 2004	Four (and in some departments five) QRC meetings held already on monthly basis with principals and in all departments.	The Pedagogical Innovation Project is a valuable tool to focus and link training, technical assistance and principals activities in the schools. Principals have shown overwhelmingly positive response participating on Saturdays.
Task 2.5: Design training and technical assistance program			
Prepare school and principal profile	Instruments for the initial collection of information about schools applied by quality facilitators and information obtained from target schools through visits. National data from Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation.	Profile document presented to MOE and distributed for use by principals in training and quality circles. Revised version of school profile including teacher analysis.	Profile will be presented in Pedagogical Conference in July 2004.
Design training and technical assistance plan	Information and technical expertise of EXCELL team. Review by USAID mission Education Specialist.	Training and technical assistance plan approved by MOE.	Available feedback suggest that the plan is consistent with international best practices and well integrated, although
Validate and complete			

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
training and technical assistance plan	International consultants in in-service training, language methodology and leadership.	Improvements in plan design and implementation. Key principal practices specified.	adjustments will have to be made in its implementation.
Task 2.6: Assist with the identification and assessment of professional development needs			
Design Pedagogical Innovation Projects	Principal training and technical assistance plan. MOE guidelines. Model for Pedagogical Innovation Project.	Training session and quality circle contents devised to promote Pedagogical Innovation Project among principals.	
Task 2.7: Design and implementation of a Baseline Study			
Design terms of reference for baseline study identify, select and contract provider for baseline study implement baseline study	Terms of Reference for baseline study Detailed proposal by contractor MOE standardized reading, writing and mathematics performance tests	Baseline survey and observation instruments. Observation and survey data collected from all schools and performance tests from 80% of schools.	Baseline study will be completed in July 2004.
Task 2.8: Adapt or create learning materials			
Review existing materials	Materials existing in MOE and others Terms of Reference for materials design.	Review completed	Review has been shared with partners to ensure the use of existing materials
Design terms of reference for materials identify, select and contract providers for materials	Consultant team proposal Comments and feedback from Quality Facilitators, Quality Managers and MOE.	Working drafts of Preliminary Module and Modules I and II. Preliminary draft of Module III.	Modules used in training and QRCs.
Adapt or create modules			
Validate and adjust materials			
Reproduce and distribute materials	Working drafts.	Copies of modules for 250 participating principals and others.	
Task 2.9: Provide training and technical assistance			
Design terms of reference for training providers	TORs developed with extensive input from MOE and local partners List of providers compiled from MOE list of approved providers and other sources	TORs distributed to potential providers	
Identify potential training organizations	Contractual limitations. Insufficient proposals.	A team of 6 trainers contracted as consultants to conduct training sessions.	
invite, select and contract training service providers			
Conduct orientation for training providers			
invite, select and contract technical assistance providers	List of providers compiled from MOE list of approved providers and other sources	TORs distributed to potential providers	
Identify needs for technical assistance	Limited offer of service providers and proposals. Decision to contract	A team of 6 short-term Quality Assistants hired to provide basic	

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
Conduct orientation for technical assistance providers	technical assistance directly and to provide through Quality Facilitators.	coverage of technical assistance needs at the school level.	
Coordinate technical assistance activities			
Provide training and technical assistance	Principal Training and Technical Assistance Plan. Principal technical assistance needs.	Technical assistance school visits planned and conducted approximately on a monthly basis, despite budget cut.	
Task 2.10: Monitor technical assistance and training			
Develop and implement monitoring for Component 2	Requests for adjustment by MOE	Preliminary revisions in monitoring tools and plan	Monitoring tools for Component 2 undergoing revision to be consistent with Baseline Study and revised work plan
	International consultant. Comments from USAID education officer. Feedback from implementation of Baseline Study.	Revised version of PMP in component 2.	
Component 3: Extend Educational Policy research			
Task 3.1: Conduct a study of education and poverty in El Salvador			
Define TORs for researcher	USAID and MINED information needs and uses for this study	Terms of Reference	
Identify, select and contract consultant	Information about state of the art on this topic		
Conduct Study 1 (Education, Equity and Development)	Study TORs. Consultant proposal. MOE information and databases.	Education quality and equity study completed and presented.	Study currently under revision by MOE for further discussion and dissemination.
Task 3.2: Definition of research topics			
Set up research committee	EXCELL yearly work plan Proposal of purpose and means for the Research Committee.	Research committee established with USAID and MOE. Meetings held as required	
Identify and contact researchers and research institutions	List of providers compiled from various sources	Presentations conducted with potential researchers	This activity completed with meetings under activities in Components 1 and 2
Design, prepare and conduct national education policy forum	Forum design detailing topics, speakers and organization agreed with MOE and USAID Cost-share and sponsorship agreements with Centro Alfa and FEPADE	Forum held as programmed with a 1-day participation of Minister, vice-Minister and main counterparts and representatives from all sectors in education	Positive feedback from participants in Forum
Select research agenda (5 topics)	Forum and round table results	Research agenda prepared and agreed upon	

Tasks and Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Comments
	Education policy report.	Final version of education policy forum report printed and distributed to participants, decision-makers and others in printed version. Forum report placed on EXCELL webpage.	
Design, prepare and conduct a National Educational research Workshop	Research agenda results Change in government (beginning June 2004).	Agreement reached to divide this activity into smaller study-specific research methods workshops	First workshop will take place in May First workshop postponed accommodating change in government.
Task 3.3: Conduct research			
Conduct study 2	Research agenda results Change in government (beginning June 2004).	Second study selected (qualitative profiling of rural teachers) Beginning of study postponed to accommodate change in government and ensure buy-in by new authorities.	Study rescheduled to begin August 2004.
Monitoring and Evaluation			
Design Performance Monitoring Plan	EXCELL results framework. Approved EXCELL yearly work plan.	First version of Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	
Design monitoring tools	First version of PMP Changes in project plan and expected results.	Drafts of monitoring tools prepared and reviewed.	Monitoring tools and system design was postponed twice due to project reviews and budget cut.
	Approved revised work plan.	Revised PMP.	Pending completion of tools and implementation.
Conduct monthly monitoring meeting	Draft monitoring tools Project rescheduling Changes in project plan and expected results. Requirement for bi-weekly USAID update.	First formal monitoring meeting held in the first week of February 2004 Monitoring conducted on ad-hoc basis.	
Produce quarterly reports	Data from EXCELL team members.	First two quarterly reports submitted and approved Third quarterly report submitted and approved.	

4 Summary data regarding number of beneficiaries assisted (July 2003 – June 2004)²

4.1 Improve the MOE's capacity to implement policy

4.1.1 Training of mid-level MOE managing team

Quarter	N	Description of Beneficiary	Description of Activity
Jul – Sep 2003	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOE Deputy Manager for Human Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define criteria and select 150 mid-level managers for training and technical assistance
Oct – Dec 2003	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOE Director for Planning and Organizational Development MOE Deputy Manager for Human Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing terms of reference for the development of the Mid-Level Management Training and Technical Assistance Model and Plan 160 mid-level managers identified and approved by MOE
Jan – Mar 2004	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals from rural schools Managers from national and departmental directorates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and discussion on activities for Mid-Level Management Training and Technical Assistance Plan in 5 workshops, 2 focus groups and 1 validation workshop
Apr – Jun 2004	151	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper- and mid-level managers from MOE national and decentralized offices Principals from EXCELL schools Representatives from other projects and press 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and kick-off session of the Management Training and Technical Assistance Plan

4.1.2 Monitoring and evaluation system development

Quarter	N	Description of Beneficiary	Description of Activity
Jul – Sep 2003	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation (DNME) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify needs for DNME development Assessing DNME existing HW and SW capacity
Oct – Dec 2003	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Director for Monitoring and Evaluation and the MOE Director for Planning and Organizational Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining terms of reference for the information needs and uses study

² Details for the last quarter of the first year (April – June 2004) are presented in Annex 4.

Quarter	N	Description of Beneficiary	Description of Activity
Jan – Mar 2004	185	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals in 4 regular education and 3 special education schools Regular and special education teachers Psychologists involved in special education Other specialists in special education Representatives of organizations for people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection, results discussions and validation of the Special Education Needs study
	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the National Directorate for Monitoring and evaluation involved in data input and review³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of the high-output scanner
Apr – Jun 2004	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the National Directorate for Monitoring and evaluation involved in data input and review⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and technical assistance in general and advanced statistics and database software use

4.2 Improve the effectiveness and quality of school administration to provide quality education to students between kindergarten and sixth grade

Quarter	N	Description of Beneficiary	Description of Activity
Jul – Sep 2003	213	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Directors, Directors and Mid-Level Managers Departmental Directors Regional Professional Development Center teams Liaison Technicians School Principals Pedagogical Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion and sensitization about EXCELL and quality in education
	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School principals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of 3 Quality Reflection Circles
Oct – Dec 2003	959	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Parents Teachers Principals MOE personnel EXCELL team and guests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 workshops conducted in six departments to discuss quality in education and the EXCELL project
Jan – Mar 2004	267 ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals in Training and Technical Assistance Plan validation workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental workshops for the validation of the Principals Training and Technical Assistance Plan

³ This does not account for the indirect benefit to users of the information prepared.

⁴ This does not account for the indirect benefit to users of the information prepared.

⁵ Number refers to instances of service provided or activity conducted with individuals

Quarter	N	Description of Beneficiary	Description of Activity
	230 ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals from schools served by EXCELL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in Quality Reflection Circles
Apr – Jun 2004	253	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals from schools served by EXCELL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in training sessions
	343 ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals from schools served by EXCELL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in Quality Reflection Circle Meetings
	466 ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals from schools served by EXCELL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in technical assistance school visits

4.3 Enhance the analysis of educational reform

Quarter	N	Description of Beneficiary	Description of Activity
Jul – Sep 2003	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives from the Escuela 10 program (Director and Chief of the Follow-Up and Monitoring Unit) Representatives from the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation (National Director and Director for Project Monitoring and Evaluation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting up Research Committee Defining content and form of the National Policy Forum Defining Terms of Reference for the first study to be conducted
Oct – Dec 2003	134	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation Participants from public sector, universities, NGOs, international organizations, schools and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Education Policy Forum
Jan – Mar 2004	5 ⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Research Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow-up on research conducted
Apr – Jun 2004	260	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Research Committee Participants in National Education Policy Forum Education Sector decision-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of second study and discussion of TORs for it Distribution of the Education Policy Forum proceedings

4.4 Other beneficiaries

A national audience was reached through participation by the Project Chief of Party in Educational Television in a one-hour interview program about the Project, its goals and its means held on April 28.

⁶ Number refers to instances of service provided or activity conducted with individuals.

⁷ Number refers to instances of service provided or activity conducted with individuals.

⁸ Number refers to instances of service provided or activity conducted with individuals.

⁹ Number refers to instances of service provided or activity conducted with individuals.

¹⁰ Does not reflect indirect beneficiaries of results of study conducted.

Additionally, approximately 50 people were reached by a presentation by EXCELL and participation in an EQUIP1 videoconference about in-service training programs using cluster models held on June 2 involving participants in four countries.

5 Problems encountered and solutions proposed

Problem issues and solutions encountered during the Project's first year of implementation are discussed in the following table. Issues arising in the first three quarters are summarized and issues from the fourth quarter highlighted when relevant (□: issues, proposals and results for April-June 2004).

Issues	Solutions Proposed	Results of Solution (if implemented)
General Project Implementation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the second quarter of Project operation (October – December 2003) the Project underwent a detailed review to ensure MOE input into the Project's design and greater Project sensitivity to MOE preferences. The MOE changed some counterparts and coordination mechanisms. 	Increase depth and frequency of communication with official MOE counterparts and include other MOE stakeholders. Promote greater internal communication within MOE to ensure consistency and follow up on decisions made.	A fully revised version of the Project's annual implementation plan was prepared and approved by the MOE with USAID cognizance. Regular monthly global coordination meetings initiated with MOE Project coordinator and a Project follow-up group including the Vice-minister and all counterparts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the third quarter of Project operation (January – March 2004) USAID policy required a budget cut of \$900,000 (18%) in the project. 	Main changes proposed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and education studies in Component 1 limited to one study. Technical assistance under C 2 reduced from three visits a month to each school to two visits per module. Policy studies under C3 reduced to three studies. Project management and implementation structure streamlined. 	USAID accepted changes proposed were accepted by USAID and project's scope was adjusted accordingly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project geographical code has placed serious limitations in contracting regional consultants and mobilizing resources. 	Contracting limited to consultants and providers based in U.S. and/or El Salvador.	Ongoing delays and challenges in implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and Materials Specialists resigned to join new Minister's team. 	Identify and contract	Pool has been used temporarily to expedient that all essential programmatic activities are completed.
Project Setup		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some misunderstanding arose among potential providers about their role in the Project. 	Increase information in meetings with potential providers.	Providers who expressed doubts about their role were involved in meetings with good result.

Issues	Solutions Proposed	Results of Solution (if implemented)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern in MOE about nature of Consultative Committee in politically charged environment. 	Modify nature of Committee to informal "Consultative Group".	Change implemented and accepted by MOE.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays in establishing Consultative Group, implementing cost-share strategy and holding inaugural function. 	Implement accelerated schedule of visits with potential Consultative Group members and reschedule inaugural function.	Consultative Group set up, cost share strategy presented and inaugural function held in second quarter, October – December 2003.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in filling post of research specialist; delay and initial candidate contracted on probation but not retained. 	Further search.	Position filled in third quarter.
Component 1		
Sub-Component 1.1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing management training needs assessment prepared by MOE made original activity planned in the project unnecessary. 	Use MOE information and intensify communication.	MOE shared information from studies and used in defining the Training and Technical Assistance Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of training activities delayed successively for a variety of reasons: project redesign in October – November 2003, budget review and redesign in February – March 2004 and change in government May – June 2004. 	Set new start date with MOE.	Formal inauguration activities held in April – May 2004 and training rescheduled to begin August 2004.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation by external providers as planned will be costly and presents contractual difficulties. 	Streamline training and technical assistance model, reduce workload and establish agreement with provider(s).	Negotiation under way with FEPADE to ensure technical and financial feasibility of implementation.
Sub-Component 1.2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-volume scanner had to be purchased in US from US provider. 	Purchase rescheduled to accommodate contractual complexity.	Equipment purchased and installed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information needs and uses study behind schedule. 	Study rescheduled to be conducted by project team members and consultants from implementing organizations.	Study conducted and to be completed July 2004.
Component 2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial presentations and implementation of principal training and technical assistance delayed due to October – November project revision. 	Activities rescheduled in agreement with MOE and USAID.	Implementation fully under way from third quarter, January, March 2004 onwards.

Issues	Solutions Proposed	Results of Solution (if implemented)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOE expressed concern that Strategic Quality Circles might be interpreted as decision structures, rather than as a learning strategy. 	Role and organization of Circles reviewed and redefined as "Quality Reflection Circles" to underline function in learning.	Organization of Quality Reflection Circles rescheduled and completed. Five monthly meetings held so far in each of six departments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bid for provision of training and technical assistance cancelled due to insufficient response and limited local responses. 	Six individual consultants and six project technical assistants contracted directly.	Revised implementation mechanism has operated as required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial MOE request that all training and meeting activities be held exclusively on Saturdays put pressure on principal's personal time. 	Explore with principals how much personal time they are willing and able to give to the process.	Agreement reached to conduct training sessions on Fridays and Quality Reflection Circles on Saturdays. Attendance has been high for both activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline study delayed due to late contracting of research and M&E specialist. 	Activity rescheduled.	Study completed and report due to be presented July 2004 by contractor.
Component 3		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity, Development and Quality in Education study delayed due to late contracting of research and M&E specialist and original bid cancelled due to geographical code issue. 	Activity rescheduled and new consultant found.	Study completed and presented June 2004 by consultant.
Monitoring and Evaluation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion and validation of Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and monitoring and evaluation tools delayed due to successive revisions in Annual Implementation Plan. 	Activity rescheduled.	Final plan and tools due to be presented July 2004.

Results and project performance targets

This section reports progress for all four quarters on activities as defined in latest revision of the Annual Plan (█: goal achieved; ◻: goal pending or reprogrammed for next quarter).

IR 1: Strengthen the Ministry of Education's capacity to improve decentralized school management and modify and implement educational reforms

Component 1: Improve management and information strategies

Task and Activities	Production goals (July 2003 – June 2004)				Comments
	Jul – Sep	Oct – Dec	Jan – Mar	Apr – Jun	
Sub-component 1.1: Strengthen capacities					
Task 1.1.1: Build professional development strategy	█	█	█	█	Implementation of PE delayed to incorporate recommendations from international consultants
Task 1.1.2: Develop T&A materials for mid-level Mgmt	█	█	█	█	Development of materials delayed due to change of MOE authorities
Task 1.1.3: Train mid-level managers	█	█	█	█	Training delayed due to change of MOE authorities
Sub-component 1.2: Apply M+E systems and research					
Task 1.2.1: Identify information needs	█	█	█	█	Report due July 2004
Task 1.2.2: Strengthen data processing capacity	█	█	█	█	Further training conditional on DMVE needs
Task 1.2.3: Deepen knowledge of management and quality	█	█	█	█	

IR 2: Student achievement improved in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals

Component 2: Improve achievement through principal training and technical assistance

Task and Activities	Production goals (July 2003 – June 2004)				Comments
	Jul – Sep	Oct – Dec	Jan – Mar	Apr – Jun	
Task 2.1: Identify and train Quality Facilitators	█	█	█	█	
Task 2.2: Promote and disseminate information about EXCELL locally	█	█	█	█	First cycle of conferences to be held July 2004
Task 2.3: Communications with MOE	█	█	█	█	Monthly meeting with minister and vice-minister continued with new MOE authorities

IR 2: Student achievement improved in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals

Component 2: Improve achievement through principal training and technical assistance

Task and Activities	Production goals (July 2003 – June 2004)				Comments
	Jul – Sep	Oct – Dec	Jan – Mar	Apr – Jun	
Task 2.4: Organize Principal Quality Reflection Circles					Up to five QRC meetings per department held so far
Task 2.5: Design training and technical assistance plan					Plan has received considerable input from international consultants and national experts
Task 2.6: Assist certification and assessment of professional development needs					P.P. included in wider 'Key Principal Practices' mode
Task 2.7: Conduct baseline study					Report to be presented by contractor July 2004
Task 2.8: Adapt create training materials					Materials being used in training and technical assistance. Feedback received from implementation
Task 2.9: Provide training and technical assistance					Up to three monthly training sessions held so far
Task 2.10: Monitor training and technical assistance					Monitoring instruments delayed due to Project revisions and delay in baseline study – due July 2004

IR 3: Policy dialogue generated through educational policy research and forums

Component 3: Educational policy research

Task and Activities	Production goals (July 2003 – June 2004)				Comments
	Jul – Sep	Oct – Dec	Jan – Mar	Apr – Jun	
Task 3.1: Conduct equity and education study					Study results shared with new MOE authorities
Task 3.2: Define research topics					Workshop rescheduled for August 2004 to accommodate change in MOE authorities

IR 3: Policy dialogue generated through educational policy research and forums					
Component 3: Educational policy research					
Task and Activities	Production goals (July 2003 – June 2004)				Comments
	Jul – Sep	Oct – Dec	Jan – Mar	Apr – Jun	
Task 3.3: Conduct research					Study rescheduled to begin August 2004 to accommodate change in MOE authorities

6 Management Information

As in previous reports, three aspects of management information are commented here:

- Intelligence about the sector and its context.
- Information about relations with counterparts and partners in implementation.
- Information about Project implementation and operation.

6.1 Intelligence about the sector and its context

Consultative Group meetings have been held regularly since the Group's installation in December 2003, and have continued to provide valuable information and insight about the education sector and the project's implementation. Changes in government led to losses in group membership towards the end of the period being reported. This has been addressed through the inclusion of four new members in the last quarter. Notes have been kept and distributed of discussions in all sessions.

Additional information about the sector has been obtained through meetings with international cooperation agencies in the sector and COP and team member participation in a variety of sector functions organized by the MOE and other organizations.

6.2 Information about relations with counterparts and partners in implementation

Communication mechanisms and information flows between the Project and its MOE counterparts improved and developed positively throughout the first year of implementation.

- a) The regular follow-up meetings with the Minister, Vice-Minister, all formal MOE counterparts, other USAID projects and USAID representatives that were set up have continued to be held every three to four weeks and an agreement reached with the new MOE authorities to continue with this practice. In June 2004 an initial meeting was held with the new Minister and Vice-Minister to agree on this and provide general information about the project, and followed up with a detailed technical meeting with the Director General for Education and the National Director for Education, two key positions created by the new Minister.
- b) Monthly meetings continued to be held by the COP with the Project counterpart coordinator (the MOE's National Director for Educational Development) – usually a few days before and in preparation of the meeting with the Minister and Vice-Minister; and with the MOE's National Coordinator for Project Programming and Follow-Up. Additionally, the COP has agreed to meet regularly with the National Director for Education, the key technical decision-maker in the new MOE structure.

- c) Other team members, namely the Quality Manager, the Training and Materials Specialist and the Research Specialist have also met on a regular basis with their counterparts.

6.3 Information about Project implementation and operation

Staff meetings have been held on a weekly basis to review weekly and monthly technical and administrative issues. A specific coordination meeting for Component 2 is now also held on a weekly basis given the complexity and variety of issues in its implementation.

In addition to an introductory project description, two quarterly update bulletins were distributed electronically to all MOE HQ counterparts, other MOE personnel and other sector agents, and in paper form to all principals taking part in Component 2 and other contacts. The EXCELL webpage on the EQUIP1 site¹³ has been updated regularly with project information and project documents are now being uploaded to be made available there.

7 Management activities

7.1 Organization

The project's original design called for subcontracting of implementers for training and technical assistance for mid-level managers and principals. This is still being contemplated for mid-level managers. In the case of principals, trainers and quality assistants were contracted as consultants directly by the project implementation unit. This has proved an effective and efficient albeit labor-intensive, measure.

The Project's structure underwent a major reorganization in response to the budget revision. This streamlined implementation by placing all field personnel under contract from AED, the project's technical leader.

7.2 Staffing

The position of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation specialist has presented some difficulties throughout the year. Initial expectations about the qualifications required for the post translated into the position not being filled until the end of the first quarter. Additionally, the first specialist had to be replaced and a new recruit was found towards the end of the third quarter and began work in April 2004.

The additional workload implied by contracting trainers and technical assistants directly implied additional administrative staff to absorb the support initially provided by CARE and Save the Children US up until their withdrawal from the Project.

7.3 Procurement

Procurement for the year being reported on consisted of a high-output scanner for the National Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation. Additional software needs for quantitative data processing and analysis for that unit have been identified through a consultancy and software will be acquired in July 2004.

¹³ <http://www.equip123.net/equip1/excell>

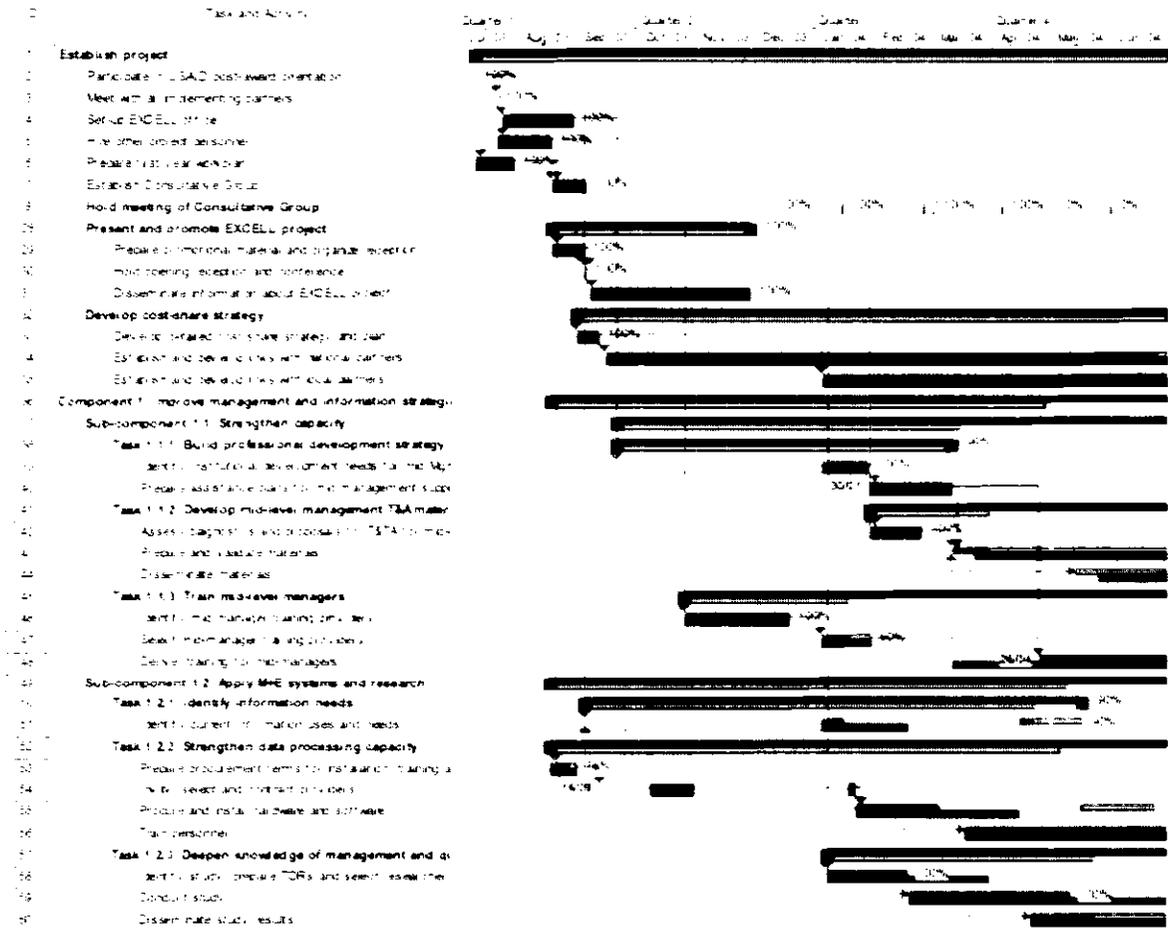
7.4 Management visits

Management visits for the quarter included the AED Project Director in charge of EXCELL, the AED Senior Education Officer in charge of Latin American education projects, the AED Global Education Center Financial Officer and the EQUIP1 Deputy Director.

7.5 Timeline of activities

The following Gantt charts present scheduling according to the project's latest revision for the whole of the first year of the project's implementation. The chart includes activities completed and activities rescheduled. Rescheduling is charted against the original schedule. In some cases this means original activities were redefined or cancelled.

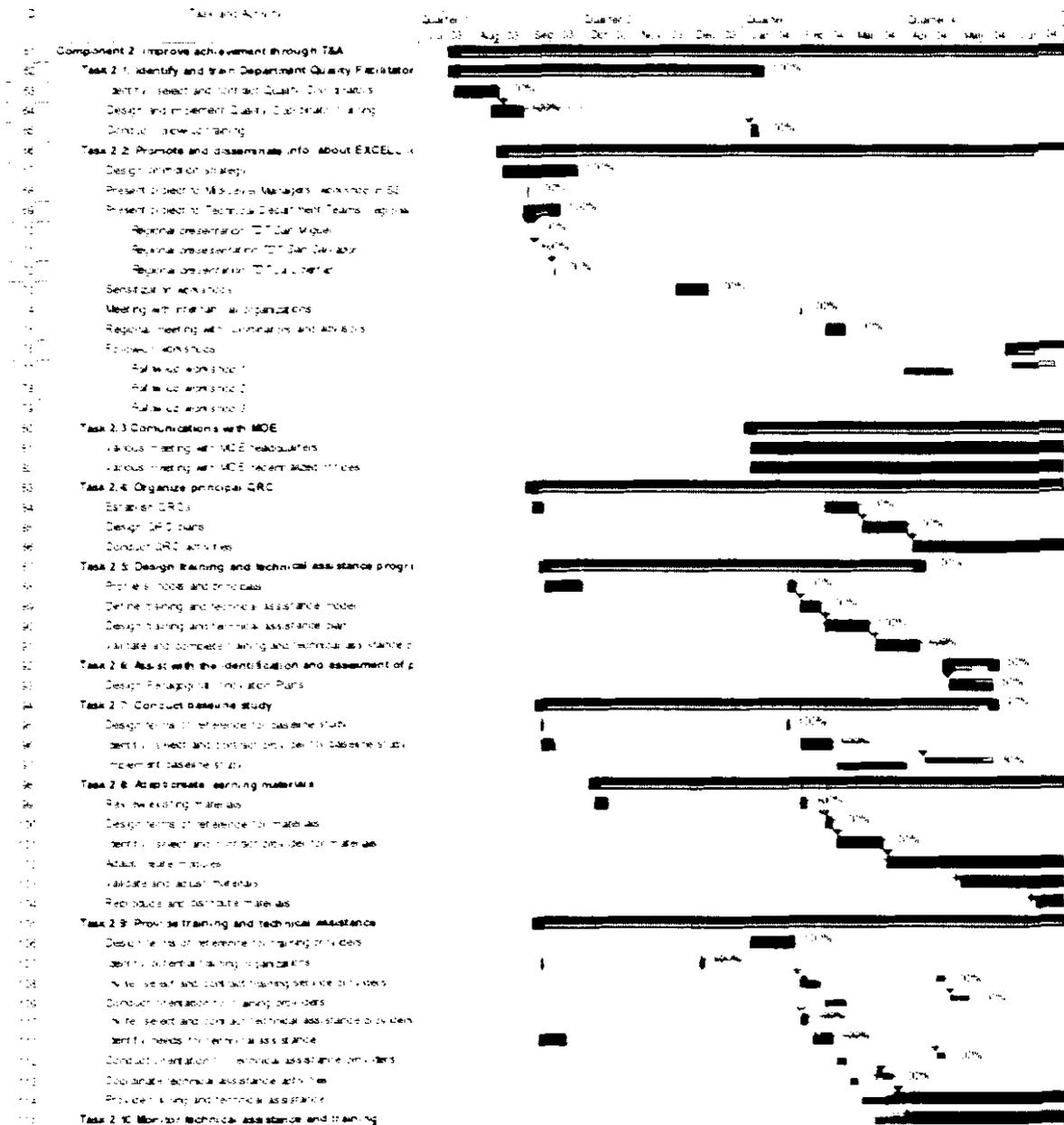
7.5.1 Project Setup and Component 1



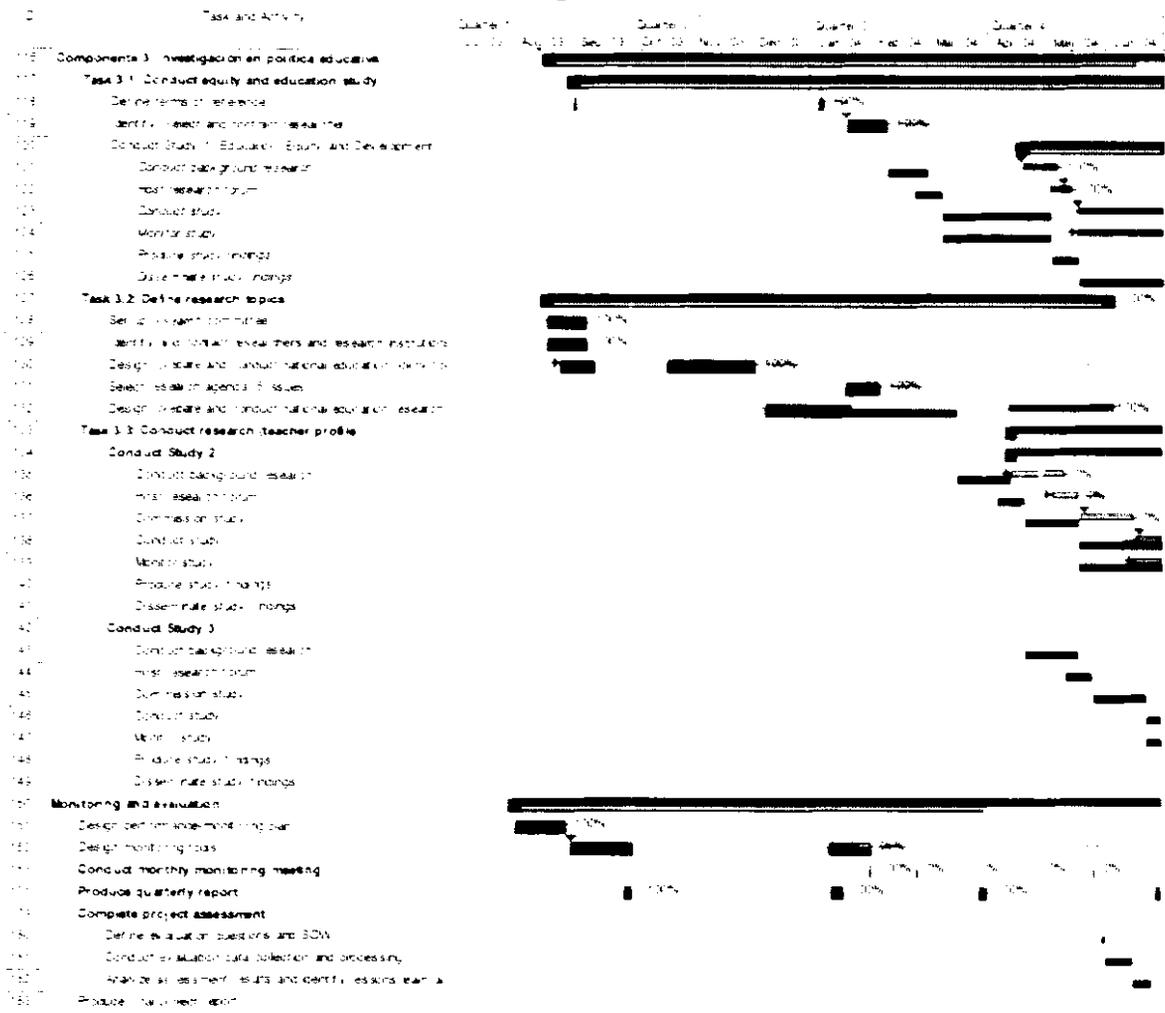
Notes:

Critical		Baseline		Project summary	
Critical split		Baseline split		External task	
Critical progress		Baseline milestone		External milestone	
Task		Milestone		Deadline	
Split		Summary, progress			
Task progress		Summary			

7.5.2 Component 2



7.5.3 Component 3 and Monitoring and Evaluation



7.6 Progress on alliance formation

During this year working relations were established with FEPADE, Centro Alfa and, more recently, Asociación Infocentros. Positive communications were held with international cooperation agencies working in rural education, including ILO-IPEC, World Vision, PLAN and Action Aid (Ayuda en Acción). In the last quarter relations were initiated with AMCHAM (American Chamber of Commerce in El Salvador) and with Banco UNO in search of partners to provide support to project activities.

8 Lessons learned and recommendations

This section summarizes key lessons learned from the Project's during the first year of its implementation and already presented in previous reports, as well as lessons derived from the fourth quarter. Each lesson is followed by specific recommendations signaled by bulleted paragraphs.

The year's experience underscores the need to ensure tools and follow a clear purpose. It has proved important to develop a strong conceptual framework to support IR 2 (Student performance improved in 250 rural schools through training and technical assistance to school principals). At the same time, implementation assumed a considerable amount of conceptual development in quality to promote in rural

education in El Salvador. Developing this conceptualization has proved time-consuming and ongoing.

- *Ongoing discussion of the model and the practical implications of its implementation have proved critical, and opportunities must continue to be established for both the team and project counterparts in the MOE and USAID to participate in such discussions.*

The Project's design is quite optimistic, as already identified in the First Quarter Implementation Report. Even without the external constraints that weighed on the project, actual implementation times have varied widely.

- *Project Leadership and USAID and MOE counterparts must continue to address timing issues in a flexible manner.*

Professional development models. Both in Sub-Component 1.1 and Component 2 Professional Development Plans were proposed and have been implemented in Component 2 to integrate a variety of training and technical assistance interventions within coherent and strategically-oriented efforts. This is an innovative approach for the MOE, more accustomed to training activities as free-standing activities, that has been positively received by all those involved, including principals and MOE officials

- *The implementation and results of training and technical assistance in the project must continue to be monitored and systematized to ensure that lessons are extracted and taken advantage of.*

Protean and multi-centered nature of MOE policy definitions. Experience has proved that the MOE is a multifaceted entity with a variety of political, policy and technical needs and interests.

- *In communicating with the MOE it must not be assumed that information and agreements shared with one counterpart necessarily reflect either the institution's overall position or that of other counterparts. Continuous and detailed communications must be held with each level and information must be shared with each about discussions with others.*

The Project's promotional activities proved very useful in obtaining feedback on the Project's design. Presenting the Project at various occasions to people at various levels of the MOE structure improved its strategic and operational design and garnered goodwill for the Project. However, the basic premise that project interventions should be designed and consulted with participants in order to empower them has caused some discomfort among counterparts, given the tension implicit between empowering principals and avoiding unnecessary tension within the MOE structures of authority

- *Consultation and design activities must be relatively "insulated" from implementation, to avoid the impression that the EXCELL team is not sure about what it wishes to obtain through the Project.*
- *Once implementing agents (NGOs, consulting and research organizations, individual consultants) have been selected, these should be involved in designing jointly with the project the activities in which they will be involved. This task should be included in their Terms of Reference.*

Project alignment with the client's interests and perceptions is paramount. Although the Project proposal and year 1 Annual Implementation Plan were prepared in

communication with the MOE, the back-and-forth exchange of documents used was insufficient to ensure that the MOE counterparts felt comfortable with the interpretations made by the Project team in an environment of changing political and technical conditions for the MOE. Once this was voiced by the MOE and acknowledged better, more frequent and detailed communications were held and the Project design became better aligned with the MOE's requests. Close USAID participation and communication in this process was also critical to ensuring a positive but realistic response by the Project to the MOE's requests. The final definition of the counterparts for each Component by the MOE was also conducive to strengthening the Project and its implications for MOE and USAID interests.

- *The project must continue to actively pursue communication with the MOE counterparts, both individually and as a group, both in terms of design and of implementation.*

Pedagogical Innovation Projects (PIP) as a key resource to focus Component 2 tasks and activities. The idea of the Pedagogical Innovation Projects has developed into a key element which helps to focus the Project's work in Component 2 around results, rather than activities or interventions. Additionally, the PIP will help participating principals to link training content with discussions in the context of the Circles for Reflection and with technical assistance at the school level.

- *The Project must follow the development of the PIPs closely and systematize their implementation and results, as this may potentially be one of the best resources in implementation and replication.*
- *EXCELL must actively seek and develop experiences and initiatives that the MOE is already applying to conduct the Project's interventions. This will improve their acceptability and sustainability.*

Agreement about legal and contractual constraints is paramount. Implementation has faced persistent setbacks in key activities around issues related to the Project's geographic code.

- *Any follow-up to the Project should early on address and resolve the issue of the source code so that it does not reappear in future implementation efforts*

Importance of streamlined management structures. The project management structure was designed to maximize the opportunities for the various partner organizations to contribute their institutional experience and expertise. However, this made project management quite cumbersome.

- *Project design must ensure the unambiguous linking of authority, responsibility, and resources for each of its tasks and activities.*

Effective communication. Ensuring formal communication with principals for meeting notification and other logistical issues has sometimes been difficult, as these must be channeled through MOE mechanisms. On another level, regular meetings with MOE counterparts continue to prove their value. In particular, the enthusiastic involvement of both the Minister and Vice-Minister in project information and activities has been very useful to expedite and ensure the pertinence of the project's interventions.

- *In addition to formal communication mechanisms, informal mechanisms ensure a smooth operation for the projects. This may include "grapevine" systems with*

each individual contacting a few of his or her peers, as well as direct but informal communications between the project team and principals.

- *Project team members must continue to schedule and promote frequent and regular meetings with MOE counterparts at the different levels including Zone Coordinators and Pedagogical Advisors to ensure their continued buy-in, as well as facilitate communication between counterparts to maintain project coherence.*

Project implementation and team reorganization. The team's multifaceted composition has been a valuable asset to the Project. Together, team-members combine knowledge about the MOE, the private and NGO sectors with a variety of disciplines and management domains. However, it has also meant some ambiguity in project responsibilities. Project implementation has reached a point now at which Component 2 is fully operational, training materials have been completed and the Mid-Management Training and Technical Assistance Plan has yet to start operating. Additionally, project completion is just one year away, and a variety of sustainability issues have begun to be identified. This matter suggests that the project team will have to face issues and display competencies that vary somewhat from the competencies required in setting up the Project. Notably, this includes being able to rapidly deploy Mid-Management Training and Technical Assistance, systematize lessons learned and maintain high team morale while conducting intensive implementation activities. Team composition should be reoriented to address changing project priorities.

- *The opportunity presented by the resignation of the Training and Materials Specialist should be used to redefine that post as directly in charge of implementation of the Mid-Management Training and Technical Assistance Plan.*
- *Expectations about responsibilities and interactions in Component 2 between field management and materials and methods design and systematization should also be reviewed in light of the needs for intensified implementation and the identification of lessons learned and next steps concerning the project.*

Project continuity and sustainability. Feedback from a variety of sources, notably consultants providing support to the project, suggests that it is imperative to think about the project and evaluate its activities and results in the context of a longer-term strategy. Constraints in resources and available time meant that the project was designed and implemented for a two-year period. However, this does not mean that its implications should be read only in the context of these two years. Rather, the project should be examined as an effort to develop effective interventions in quality in education for rural schools and with school principals.

- *During the coming year, emphasis should be made on concentrating on the most effective and viable aspects of EXCELL interventions, and how these can be efficiently replicated. In contrast, less effective or unviable interventions should be curtailed.*
- *Additionally, efforts should be made to recognize opportunities to optimize the Project's results and impact.*
- *Finally, it is fundamental to identify how the Project's results and interventions align with the USAID Mission's new country strategy.*

Risks and challenges in implementation of Sub-Component 1.1. As explained in this report training and technical assistance for mid-level managers has so far not

proceeded beyond the planning stage for a variety of external reasons. This poses both risks, as implementation will have to proceed in a compressed schedule, and opportunities, as resources may still be usefully reoriented toward aspects of Component 2 that were negatively affected by the March 2004 budget cut, notably technical assistance in the field.

- *In designing the 2004-2005 Project Implementation Plan, decisions should be made about possible resource reallocations between Sub-Component 1.1 and Component 2.*

Implementation of complementary interventions in Component 2. Experience in the implementation of Component 2 has shown the positive attitude that pedagogical advisors and teachers have shown towards the Project, including pedagogical advisors volunteering in project activities. However, the positive interventions developed with Principals could be greatly benefited through ongoing support to teachers and pedagogical advisors.

- *Although resource limitations imply that no systematic large-scale activities can be conducted with teachers and pedagogical advisors, an effort should be made to identify, and as far as possible test, activities that could later on be built into a coordinated intervention with these various populations.*

Central importance of school-level technical assistance. Having overcome the challenges of initiating implementation of training sessions and Quality Reflection Circles, the importance of school-level technical assistance has now become much more evident in project implementation. However, this aspect of the project was also the one most severely hit by budget reallocation.

- *Continuing efforts must be made to develop an effective model for in-school technical assistance to principals, as well as expanding field team capacities needed for providing such technical assistance.*

Annex 1: Level of effort

Team Member	Level of Effort (in days)					Total	Average per Month
	Jul-Sep '03	Oct-Dec '03	Jan-Mar '04	Apr-Jun '04			
Chief of Party	48	54	56	64	222	19	
Quality Manager	62	58	63	64	247	21	
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	15	34	31	65	145	12	
Training and Materials Specialist	34	60	63	65	222	19	
Administrative and Financial Manager	40	58	63	65	226	19	
Quality Facilitators (6)		343	378	384	1105	92	
Quality Assistants (6)				242	242	20	
Trainers				84	84	7	
Administrative Assistants ¹	65	116	117	260	558	47	
Driver		35	63	65	163	14	
TOTAL	264	758	834	1358	3214	268	

¹ Contracted as consultants but functionally part of the Project team.

² Administrative assistants were increased from 2 to 4 in the April - June 2004 quarter to address increased workload due to implementation.

Annex 2: List of documents produced

The following documents were prepared during this year and are available on demand:

1. Dewees, Anthony (2004). Equidad, Calidad Educativa y Desarrollo en El Salvador: Estudio Introductorio.
2. EXCELL (2003). Resumen Ejecutivo de Avance: Octubre de 2003.
3. EXCELL (2004). Centros Escolares, Directores y Directoras atendidos por el Proyecto EXCELL: Caracterización General (Schools and Principals served by the EXCELL Project: a general profile)
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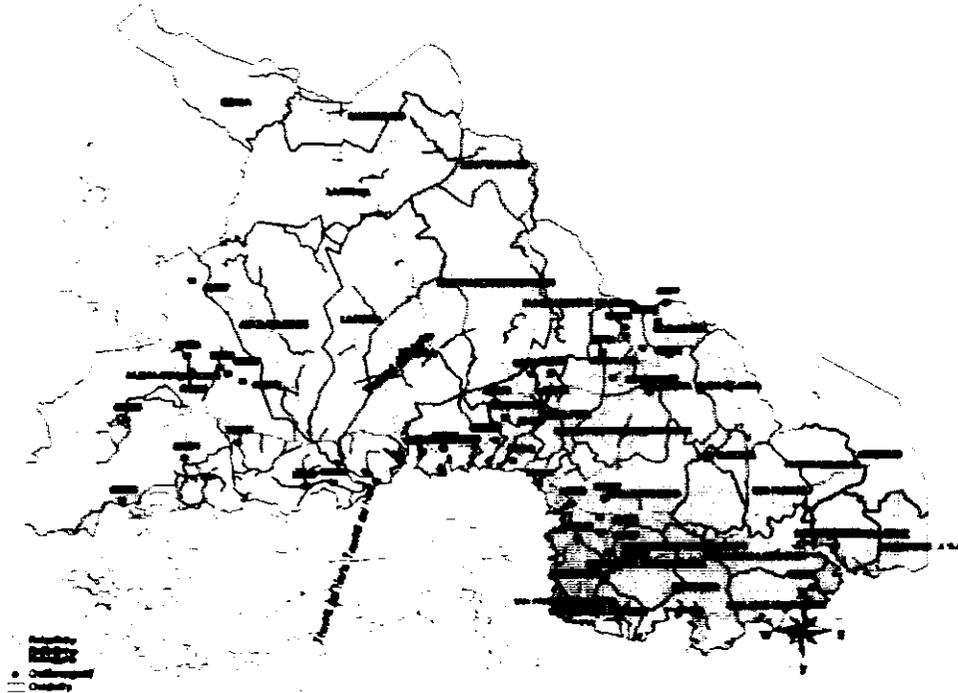
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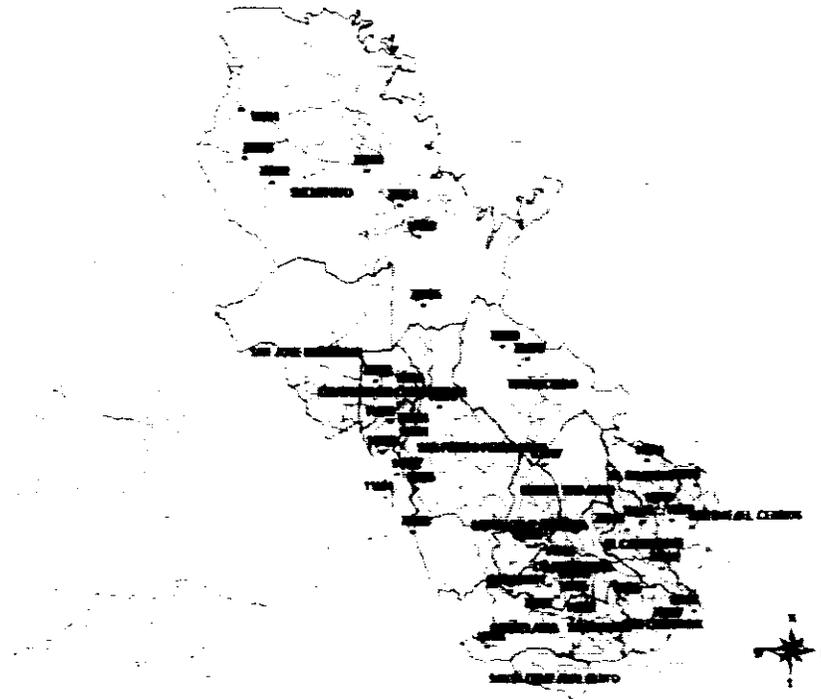
Annex 3: Geographic information (Component 2)

The following maps were prepared by the MOE Directorate for Infrastructure plotting the localization of the schools served by the EXCELL Project.

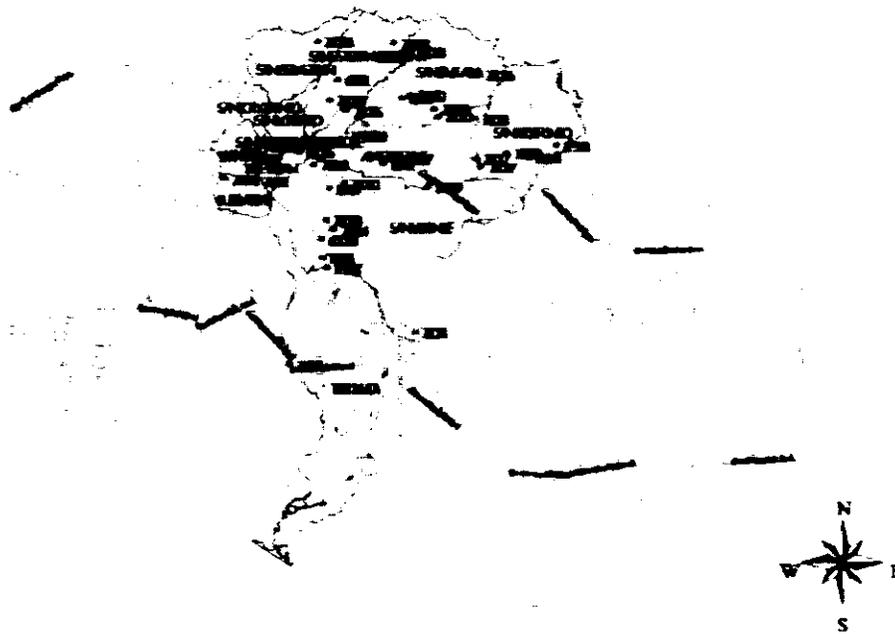
Chalatenango



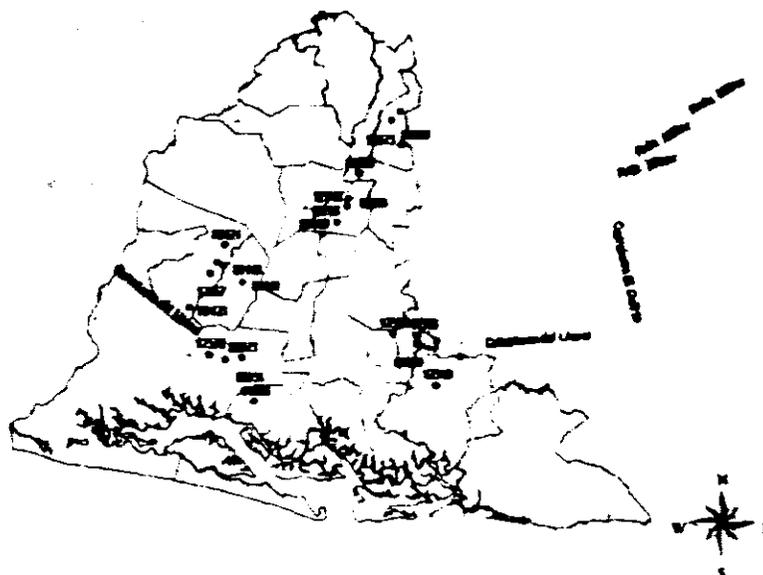
Cuscatlán



San Vicente



Usulután



Annex 4: Detailed beneficiary data for April – June 2004

Sub-Component 1.1

Activities in Sub-Component 1.1 of the Project for the fourth quarter of the project's implementation involved people in the formal presentation and kick-off session of the Management Training and Technical Assistance Plans detailed in the following table.

Category	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
MOE offices	35	38%	58	62%	93	100%
EXCELL schools	16	44%	20	56%	36	100%
Others	13	59%	9	41%	22	100%
Total	64	42%	87	58%	151	100%

Sub-Component 1.2

Between April and June 2004 Sub-Component 1.2 involved training and technical assistance in general and advanced statistics and software use for 5 members of personnel in the Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation.

Component 2

Activities in Component 2 benefited principals and Pedagogical Advisors involved in the principal training and technical assistance process, including training sessions, Quality Reflection Circle Sessions, and principals and teachers in Technical Assistance visits to schools in the six departments covered by EXCELL.

Category	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Principals in training sessions	253	56%	199	44%	452	100%
Principals in Quality Reflection Circle meetings	343	57%	256	43%	599	100%
Total	596	57%	455	43%	1051	100%

Additionally, 466 technical assistance visits have been conducted, 108 in April, 120 in May and 138 in June.

Component 3

Beneficiaries of activities under Component 3 for April - June 2004 included 260 recipients of the Education Policy Forum proceedings report and the members of the Research Committee.