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Save the Children Federation, USA

University of Pittsburgh

World Education



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**Exelencia Quarterly Report**  
November 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005



Submitted by:

**American Institutes for Research**

With:

**Academy for Educational Development  
Save the Children Federation, USA**

U.S. Agency for International Development  
Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-00006-00

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Expansion of Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA Method (Exelencia)

Prime: American Institutes for Research

Partners: Academy for Educational Development  
Save the Children Federation, USA

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-00006-00

USAID Nicaragua Cooperative Agreement No. 524-A-00-06-00004-00

Reporting Dates: November 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005

Project Budget: \$11,500,000

Project Start Date: November 29, 2006

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## ACRONYMS

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AIR	American Institutes for Research
APA	Aprendo, Pratico, Aplica
BASE	Basic Education and Training Program II
COP	Chief of Party
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
Excelencia	Expansion of the Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA (Aprendo, Practico y Aplico) Method
MECD	Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes
PRONICASS	Programa Nicaraguense de Apoyo al Sector Social
SO	Strategic Objective
TOR	Terms of Reference
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the first two weeks of Excelencia's dynamic and rapid start-up during which Excelencia staff undertook the dual tasks of opening the project office and producing validation materials for the MECD.

Due to the relatively short nature of this reporting period (November 29 – December 31), this report is unique in nature and, for the most part, will focus upon Excelencia's administrative achievements. In future reports, Excelencia will measure progress through specific Intermediate Results (IR's) to demonstrate how well the project is progressing. Excelencia is also committed to providing success stories to personalize the positive affects of USAID's work on the people of Nicaragua.

The Expansion of Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA Method, Excelencia, is a USAID-funded four-year project with a mandate to expand proven educational methodologies into schools throughout Nicaragua. Excelencia builds upon the successful BASE and BASE II projects, using the APA methodology (Aprendo, Pratico and Aplico), active teaching, community participation, and reformed curriculum to support:

- ◆ Decentralization,
- ◆ Schools as centers of learning,
- ◆ Students as architects of their own learning, and
- ◆ Empowering teachers.

Excelencia introduces these educational methodologies into new schools through a model of school mentoring. Schools that have implemented and fully incorporated the Excelencia educational methodologies will serve as mentors for surrounding schools. In addition, Excelencia activities will emphasize training and capacity building workshops for Ministry of Education officials, teachers, school directors, school councils, and students to empower the key players to sustain the educational model. Excelencia will also provide complementary instructional resources including personal erasable whiteboards for the multi-grade students, "mathematics baskets" (kits of resources for hands-on learning) and other supplies to support active learning in the classroom. Excelencia activities fall under three results:

- Result 1 will enhance the active learning model and expand the model into 2000 new schools;
- Result 2 will incorporate competency-based methodologies into multi-grade school materials; and
- Result 3 will produce longitudinal and other studies that will assess and enhance the impact of Excelencia and focus upon transitions into and from primary school.

By project's end, Excelencia will have expanded into an additional 2,000 schools, developed validation materials, and produced research reports to measure the effectiveness of the expansion in support of a developing an adaptable methodology.

### **Partners**

American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the administrative lead on this award and is joined by EQUIP1 partners the Academy for Educational Development (AED), as the technical lead and Save the Children, as a technical partner. As an EQUIP1 project, Excelencia will emphasize the project identity rather than the identity of any one partner organization. Partner organizations will work closely to ensure integration of specific partner results.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Excelencia's primary objective is to support a nation-wide expansion of an enhanced educational model with the purpose of promoting active teaching, community participation, and reformed curriculum based on competencies with an emphasis on the educational needs of indigenous peoples and ethnic communities. These activities will directly address USAID/Nicaragua's Strategic Objective (SO) #3: Investing in People: Healthier Better Educated People, specifically, Intermediate Result 3.2: Increased and Improved Basic Education Opportunities.

Excelencia is an integrated program combining AED's expertise in the APA methodology, AIR's expertise in conducting major research studies and Save the Children's expertise in transitional education. Excelencia activities all fall under three major results. These results are:

- *Result 1:* Implementing the active learning model in 2000 new schools and incorporating early reading programs from the Centers of Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) project and, in the Atlantic Coast, incorporating bilingual education approaches.
- *Result 2:* Developing and validating school materials using the competency-based methodology, so that materials will be ready for use at the national level.
- *Result 3:* Conducting longitudinal and other research to assess the impact of the project; and conducting field studies to determine effective means of improving transition to and from primary school.

<b>Result 1</b>	<b>Result 2</b>	<b>Result 3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Strengthen experience staff with the MECD, school and community level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ School materials designed and validated for the new competency based curriculum</li> <li>◆ Teachers trained in how to use the new school materials for validation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Longitudinal studies</li> <li>◆ Transition into primary study</li> <li>◆ Transition from primary to secondary</li> </ul>

### Project Area

Excelencia will be working throughout Nicaragua. The project will maintain one main project office in Managua located at the Ministry of Education. Excelencia staff working on transitional education issues will also work from a Save the Children's office in Chinandega. In addition, Excelencia will contract two NGOs to implement Excelencia activities in the South Atlantic Coast and North Atlantic Coast regions.

## ADMINISTRATION

Excelencia activities during the first quarter focused start up activities - e.g., opening the project office, contracting support and technical staff, recruiting for and hiring financial staff. To facilitate the start-up, the COP and home office staff from AIR and AED traveled to Nicaragua the week of December 12 – December 16, 2005. The team's specific tasks include meeting with USAID and MECD as well as other stakeholders, contracting Excelencia administrative and technical staff, opening Excelencia offices, establishing proper financial process and orienting staff to Excelencia. The table below lists specific administrative tasks.

Start-up Activities	Quarter 1 (November 29 – December 31, 2005)		
	November	December	Status
<b>Office Space</b>			
Open Excelencia office	-	-----◇	Accomplished
Purchase of minimal office equipment		-----→	Ongoing
Review BASE II office furniture and vehicles		----◇	Accomplished
Purchase furniture for office space		-----→	Ongoing
<b>Human Resources &amp; Staffing</b>			
Hire COP	◇		Accomplished
Contract administrative staff	-	-----→	Ongoing
Contract consultants		--◇	Accomplished
Recruit financial staff	----	-----→	Ongoing. Interviews completed. Two strong candidates identified. Recommendation inquires sent.
<b>Meetings</b>			
Partner Project Start-up Meetings	-----	-----◇	Accomplished
Introductory Meeting with USAID CTO and SO team		◇	Accomplished
Courtesy Meeting with MECD		◇	Accomplished
Meeting with USAID Mission Director		◇	Accomplished
Introductory Meeting with PRONICASS COP		◇	Accomplished
<b>Other Administrative Tasks</b>			
AIR registered in Nicaragua	--◇		Accomplished
Bank Account opened	--◇		Accomplished
LOA signed by AED	-◇		Accomplished
LOA negotiation with Save the Children		--→	Ongoing

## **Office Space**

Excelencia is housed in former BASE II project offices located in two separate spaces at the MECD. Excelencia was able to open the office within days of signing the cooperative agreement. The office was functioning soon after as Excelencia was able to leverage equipment, computers and furniture left behind by BASE II. During this period, Excelencia staff reviewed BASE II equipment in storage and developed a list of equipment, computers and furniture needed to complete the office start-up. Excelencia also painted the office, turned on the phone lines and fixed the roof. By the end of the reporting period, both offices were partially operational. Excelencia staff continue to work to make both offices fully operational.

Interested parties can find the list of procurement in Attachment One.

## **Human Resources & Staffing**

Excelencia moved quickly to contract technical and administrative integral to the implementation of the project. AED identified and contracted the Chief of Party, Jose Ignacio Mata, on December 1. Excelencia identified and contracted 7 key technical staff, formerly employed by BASE II, to manage the administrative and technical start-up. In addition, Excelencia continued contracting 20 consultants, at MECD's request, to develop materials for the curriculum validation. PRONICASS had contracted these same consultants while Excelencia started operations.

The COP and AIR home office staff arranged for and held several interviews for the Financial Manager and Accountant positions. The field of candidates was very strong and upon the end of the week, the interview team identified two strong candidates for the Financial Manager position and began checking references.

Interested parties can find the complete list of contracted staff in Attachment Two.

## **Meetings**

### Start-Up Meetings. Multiple dates.

EQUIP 1 success depends on close cooperation among the three partners American Institutes for Research (AIR), Academy for Educational Development (AED), and Save the Children. Representatives of all three, met in Washington, D.C. to reach agreement in the matters of staffing, office space and facilities, transportation, budgets, consultants, travel, procurement and communications.

### Post-Award Meeting . December 6, 2006.

AIR and AED Home office staff and Excelencia COP met to review the project components and discuss administration, communication and project implementation issues.

### Introductory Meetings with USAID, Monday, December 12, 2005

Excelencia COP, EQUIP1 Program Manager and AED/AIR home office staff met with CTO Alicia Slate and other member the SO team. The team discussed their vision of Excelencia as well as administrative and reporting issues.

### December 13, 2005 Meeting with USAID CTO and MECD Minister

Excelencia COP and home office staff with Excelencia CTO made a courtesy call to the Minister of Education. The Minister introduced the new National Education Director, Dr. Tulio Tablada, who will act as the direct counterpart for the project.

Excelencia Partner Meeting, December 14, 2005

Representatives from AIR, AED and Save the Children met to discuss integration issues and specific roles and responsibilities. This meeting provided the opportunity for the COP to meet his Save the Children counterparts.

Excelencia Introductory and Contracting Meeting, Thursday, December 15, 2005

After Excelencia staff were contracted, representatives from AIR, AED and Save the Children introduced their respective organizations to Excelencia staff. The EQUIP1 Program Manager presented the structure of EQUIP1 and how Excelencia fits into the larger picture of EQUIP. introduced the COP and addressed any staff concerns regarding salary and benefits.

Excelencia Meeting with PRONICASS, December 16, 2006

PRONICASS is a project of Management Sciences for Health, providing technical assistance to different Nicaraguan institutions in management, planning and decentralization. While Excelencia started and in order not to stop the design of school materials for their validation during 2006 school year, PRONICASS hired the team of consultants in charge of that design. Excelencia will continue their contracts until the materials are ready for validation.

Excelencia meeting with MECD, December 16, 2006

In a new meeting with the Minister and the National Education Director, representatives of AIR and AED distributed copies of the technical proposal. This document will allow the counterparts into the Ministry to know better the contribution that Excelencia is offering to their goals.

Excelencia meeting with USAID, Friday, December 17, 2005

USAID held a final debriefing meeting at USAID offices with CTO and other members of SO team. AIR and AED representatives gave a summary of activities carried over the week for the start-up of the project, and agreed in a plan for the upcoming weeks.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Despite the short reporting period, Excelencia was able to undertake technical activities before the Christmas break, specifically activities under Result 2. Excelencia is in the planning phase for Results 1 and 3 and will undertake activities in the upcoming quarter.

### **Result 1: Enhancing and Expanding Active Learning Model**

Excelencia identified the facilitators for the expansion of Excelencia method, formulated their contract with their roles and responsibilities, and will start working at the beginning of next Quarter.

### **Result 2: Developing and Validating School Materials**

Excelencia contracted the team of consultants for school materials production, as previously hired by PRONICASS. This team will continue working as planned, under the technical supervision of EXCELENCIA senior technical advisor. Excelencia received from PRONICASS the first drafts of schools materials and continued contracting the team of consultants for their follow up, adaptation and final preparation for validation.

### **Result 3: Research Studies**

Excelencia has identified a research team, is planning logistics for a site visit to Managua and is holding discussions with partner organizations to ensure all research findings are integrated into project activities.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Excelencia designed the Terms of Reference (TOR), identified and hired the professionals who will work in this area, and began processing their contracts to begin at the first days of next quarter.

### **Work Plan**

Excelencia submitted its Preliminary Work Plan with the final submission of the Excelencia proposal. The Excelencia staff are currently working closely with USAID, using a very participatory approach, to revise the preliminary plan to address the realities on the ground.

## **PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER**

Excelencia expects to complete the organization of its office, the purchase of the equipment and supplies and the hiring of the remaining personnel during next quarter. Project launching will take place during next quarter, once the project has organized the Excelencia National Committee.

### **Result 1: Enhancing and Expanding Active Learning Model**

Excelencia will contract facilitators specializing in expansion and will assign a number of schools to each of them. Excelencia will then train these facilitators and prepare their result-specific work plan.

### **Result 2: Developing and Validating School Materials**

The team of school materials producers will continue working until July 2006, when Excelencia plans to have all the regular and multi-grade schools materials completed. Excelencia will print the materials for distribution in the 200 schools selected for validation, and train teachers to use the materials in their classroom.

### **Result 3: Research Studies**

Excelencia, with guidance from the MECD and USAID, will identify and determine the number and subjects of research studies based on the recommendations of the research consultant team.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Excelencia will present a plan for monitoring and evaluation of the project's progress

### **Work Plan**

Excelencia will present a more concrete work plan and communication plan during the next quarter.

**ATTACHMENTS****Attachment One: Procurement List****GASTOS EFECTUADOS Y PROGRAMADOS PARA EL MES DE DICIEMBRE**

Nombre	Descripción	Monto en US\$*
Personnel (4 people)	Salaries	2,205.28
Consultants (20 people)	Consultant Fees	26,314.18
Distribuidora La Universal	Office Supplies	2,025.00
Various	Office Maintainance	3,543.00
Miguel Moreno Ulloa	Incorporación Líneas telef.	38.74
		34,126.20

**GASTOS EFECTUADOS**

Nombre	Descripción	Monto en C\$	Monto en US\$*
Miguel Moreno Ulloa	Incorporación Líneas telef.	650.00	38.01
Marcia Aguilera	Consultoría 2 al 8 diciembre	10,263.96	600.23
Distribuidora La Universal	Papelería y útiles de oficina	21,167.83	1,237.88
COPASA	Manten. Aires Acondicionados	4,452.71	260.39
Erving Mayorga Masis	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Leyla del Carmen Morales	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Ligia Madrigal Mendieta	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	16,416.00	960.00
Miriam Hernández	Supervisora de Elab. De Cuad	27,360.00	1,600.00
María Luisa Molina	Supervisora de Elab. De Cuad	27,360.00	1,600.00
Xiomara del C. Ortez	Apoyo Secretarial a Grupo de trabajo Elab de Cuadernos	7,524.00	440.00
Francisco Róger Sequeira	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Elba Álvarez Benavides	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Sigfrido Antonio Guevara	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Esperanza de Jesús Moreno	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Digna Emérita Cerda H	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Esperanza del Rosario Mayorga	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
María Elena Mairena	Apoyo Secretarial a Grupo de trabajo Elab de Cuadernos	4,275.00	250.00
César Alberto Escobar	Supervisor de Elab. De Cuad	27,360.00	1,600.00

Alicia Martínez Téllez	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.00	1,407.95
Aura Lina Salazar	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Petrona del Rosario Cruz T.	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Róger Norori Gutiérrez	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	16,416.00	960.00
Ramón Sebastián Escobar	Supervisor de Elab. De Cuad	24,076.80	1,408.00
Luis Alberto Gutiérrez	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo	24,076.80	1,408.00
Marcia Aguilera	Salario del 09 al 15 Diciembre	9,215.00	538.89
Marcia Aguilera	Salario del 15 al 31 Diciembre	19,747.40	1,154.82
Iván José Ruíz Flores	Salario del 12 al 15 Diciembre	586.64	34.31
Iván José Ruíz Flores	Salario del 15 al 31 Diciembre	2,200.00	128.65
María Jesús Izaguirre	Salario del 19 al 31 Diciembre	3,321.23	194.22
Lugo rent a car	Aquiler de camioneta (5 días)	8707.37	509.20
Omar Gutiérrez García	Reparac. Y limpieza cortinas	2,990.00	174.85
Lindell Francisco González	Mano de obra cambio de cielo raso	4,068.00	237.89
Hopsa de Nicaragua S.A	443 láminas de poroplast	8,098.01	473.57
Marcia Aguilera	Combustible, botiquin, art. Aseo	8,469.40	495.29
Ezequiel Castillo Gamboa	Pintura de oficinas	11,224.00	656.37
Roberto Vallecillo	Manten. Generadores eléctric	16,758.00	980.00
Marcia Aguilera	Caja Chica para gastos menores	5,000.00	292.40
Aura Marina López Barcala	Limpieza oficina técnica módulo L	1,250.00	73.10
LUBNICA	Dos baterías para Camioncito Ford	3,040.00	177.78
María Luisa Ortega Jaens	Salario del 06 al 15 Diciembre. Conserje	990.00	57.89
María Luisa Ortega Jaens	Salario del 16 al 30 Diciembre. Conserje	1,650.00	96.49
			34,126.21

### Gastos menores pendientes:

Compra de dos lava lampazos para las oficinas Técnicas (Planta baja y planta alta)

Extractor de olores para servicios sanitarios (5)

Pago de jardinero (módulo L y módulo P) dos días de trabajo

300.00

Compra de plantas para oficinas

1,600.00

Pago de afanadora para oficinas técnicas módulo L

750.00

Combustible

1,000.00

Compra de transformadores para lámparas dobles de 40 watts

340.00

Tazas con sus escudillas, cucharitas, tenedores y cuchillos

2,500.00

**6,490.00**

**Attachment Two: Hiring List****PERSONAL CONTRATADO EN DICIEMBRE**

<b>Nombre</b>	<b>Cargo</b>
José Ignacio Mata Gamarra	Director - COP
Oscar Mogollón Jaime	Gerente Técnico - Technical Lead
Jacqueline Victoria Sánchez	Vice Gerente Técnico
Jeanethe Toruño	Coordinadora Financiera-Recursos Humanos - HR Manager
Erving Mayorga Masis	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo
Leyla del Carmen Morales	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo
Ligia Madrigal Mendieta	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo
Miriam Hernández	Supervisora de Elab. De Cuad
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Ramón Sebastián Escobar	Supervisor de Elab. De Cuad
Luis Alberto Gutiérrez	Elaborac. Cuadernos Trabajo
Marcia Aguilera	Gerente Administrativo - Admin Manager
Iván José Ruíz Flores	Conductor - Driver
María Jesús Izaquirre	Asistente Administrativo - AA
María Luisa Ortega Jaens	Conserje - Cleaning person