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USAID/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC EDUCATION PORTFOLIO MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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USAID/DR Education Portfolio Mid-Term Performance Evaluation: Integrated Report

Submitted to: USAID/Dominican Republic

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USAID/DR Education Portfolio Mid-Term Performance Evaluation

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Executive Summary

By most standards the quality of public basic education in the Dominican Republic is poor. Despite nearly universal enrolment students are not learning at the expected rate, and scores on tests for achievement in fundamental literacy and numeracy skills are low. The USAID/Dominican Republic mission (USAID/DR) has a long history of support to quality basic education in the country and to the Ministry of Education (MINERD). The current portfolio builds on this experience both in its objectives and approaches, and with its implementing partners who are almost exclusively Dominican.

The mid-term performance evaluation of the education portfolio is in two parts: the evaluation of the program as a whole; and performance evaluations of each of the component projects. The project evaluations provide the evidence required to assess the central evaluation questions - performance, efficiency, and sustainability – for USAID/DR education programming. The two-fold approach responds to the two objectives of the evaluation. The evidence-based analysis at the project level identifies strengths and weaknesses in implementation, and makes recommendations for mid-course corrections to improve project results. The evaluation of the portfolio as a whole is intended to inform mission strategic decisions about how to approach education programming in the future and to set priorities among various components.

USAID/DR Education Portfolio

The primary focus of the evaluation is on the two large on-going projects, the Effective Schools Program (ESP), which is the implementing mechanism to achieve the first intermediate result of the education results framework, “Improved student performance in reading and math in grades 1 to 4,” and the Basic Education Program (BEP), which implements the second intermediate result, “Strengthened community and private sector involvement in education.” These projects began in 2009 and will continue until 2014, but they are also extensions of past USAID programs with the same implementing partners, the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) for ESP, and the American Chamber of Commerce in the Dominican Republic (AMCHAM/DR) for BEP.

Three additional activities are included in the portfolio evaluation. The completed Out-of-School and At-Risk Youth and Children Program (ARYC) operated through five short-term grants with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These activities have ended, and the purpose of the final evaluation of this program is to draw lessons for the recently initiated At-Risk Youth Program, which implements the third intermediate result for education, “Increased learning opportunities for at-risk youth.” Finally, the evaluation briefly examines two other projects with education components, the on-going Batey Community Development project (BCD) and the recently completed, Major League Baseball-Dominican Development Alliance (MLB-DDA), which are linked to the programs to improve student learning in reading and mathematics, and to increase learning opportunities for at-risk youth, respectively.

Evaluation Questions and Methodology

At both the project and portfolio levels the evaluation examines three main questions:

- **Performance:** the extent to which the project is on track to produce the expected results and to contribute to improved quality in education; the response of the portfolio to cross-cutting requirements, including broad program components, gender equality, and performance monitoring.
- **Efficiency:** identification of the core aspects of the project, the necessary and sufficient activities to achieve the project objective; the extent to which the projects in the portfolio form an integrated program, in which the effect of the portfolio is greater than the individual activities.

- **Sustainability:** factors that affect whether the activity could continue without USAID assistance; the contribution of the USAID/DR portfolio to improved quality of education in the country as a whole, and coordination of USAID within the education system.

The evaluation employs a mixed methods approach to examine these questions drawing on data from Mission and program documents, interviews with key informants including USAID staff, project implementers, other public and private sector stakeholders, interviews with beneficiaries (school directors and teachers, MINERD technical staff, students, and parents), and visits to a subgroup of schools participating in the ESP, BEP, and BCD programs, which included systematic classroom observation. Finally, the evaluation drew on statistical analysis of the ESP database to measure change in student achievement in literacy and mathematics. Attention to gender considerations was integrated throughout the data collection and analysis processes through reference to the 2009 USAID Gender Assessment Report, deliberate efforts to include both men and women in key informant interviews and classroom observation, and through gender analysis of the ESP student database. Questions about gender differences also were included in the interview schedules and in the classroom observation protocol.

The value of the mixed methods approach to evaluation emerges in an analytic process based on triangulation whereby various sources are used to cross-validate findings and patterns. All team members participated in the data collection process. Each project evaluation and the statistical analysis was managed by an individual team member, supported by substantial interaction and discussion within the team.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations from ESP and BEP¹

Both of the two core programs of the portfolio have improving the quality of public basic education as the highest objective in their results frameworks. The ESP has been designed and implemented as an integrated program by PUCMM, a leading Dominican educational institution, with support from USAID since the early 2000s. The objective of the ESP is defined as “improvement in quality learning of students” and the interventions are focused on teachers and schools. The objective of BEP is to improve the quality of basic education in selected public schools through “comprehensive, sustainable and integrated interventions.”

Each program utilizes the same types of interventions (e.g., teacher training, provision of materials, and school-management work with directors), but the structures for achieving program objectives are significantly distinct.

ESP’s four components – in-service teacher training for literacy and mathematics, education management, safe schools, and monitoring and evaluation – although comprising an integrated program are implemented relatively independently. The core of the program is improved pedagogy through training and extended classroom coaching and accompaniment. The pedagogical strategies promulgated by the program rely heavily on educational materials and student textbooks, which are provided to the schools by the program. PUCMM has a close working relationship with MINERD, which has collaborated in selection of the program’s target schools and is supporting the extension of the program into additional districts.

In contrast, BEP’s four components are process-oriented and include private sector involvement, school sponsorship interventions, strategic alliances with the private and public sectors, and assessment,

¹ The full evaluation reports for these projects are included as Annexes A and B.

monitoring and evaluation.² While quality education through comprehensive interventions is the stated objective of the project, BEP is more clearly identified as a mechanism to strengthen community and private sector involvement in education. The interventions are implemented by AMCHAM/DR, which provides administrative and technical assistance to connect private sector firms as school sponsors to public schools. Neither AMCHAM/DR nor the sponsors are educational institutions. Instead, the alliance between AMCHAM/DR and the private sponsors is grounded in the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, and presents support to quality basic education as one of several available options for investment. AMCHAM/DR has contracted an education coordinator to support technical implementation. Further, while the objective is to develop “comprehensive, systematic and integrated interventions” the means for implementing these interventions is a decentralized business model – essentially bidding out contracts to vendors for service provision. BEP engages with the MINERD not in a technical capacity (with basic education or curriculum development), but instead through community participation.

A key element in the evaluation is the comparison of these two programs with similar objectives but very different operating structures, across the evaluation questions related to performance, efficiency, and sustainability.

Performance. The evaluation team used the same evaluation tools to assess perceptions and carry out observations at the school-level for both programs, highlighting the contrast between them in terms of performance in the schools.

The ESP teacher training component is positively perceived by teachers, directors, and parents, who feel that the pedagogical strategies are effective in motivating students and in increasing learning. Statistical assessment results generally confirm these perceptions. Classroom support and accompaniment by program staff emerge as key factors in adoption of the new strategies. District technicians have not been as effective in this role. Teachers actually use the strategies and the program materials in the classroom to varying degrees. Traditional dictation methods were not observed in any classes visited. The mathematics textbooks are a fundamental ingredient to applying the ESP pedagogical strategies in mathematics.

The education management component is smaller but school directors who have participated in the program perceive it as valuable, and again, accompaniment directly to directors by ESP program technical staff is identified as important. Likewise, training of district technical staff to fill this role has not been successful.

BEP performance is more difficult to characterize and assess, particularly in terms of effect in the schools. While directors and teachers appreciate any support they receive, the BEP program in general has not achieved (to date) a “comprehensive, coordinated, and systematic intervention” plan. The program has been successful as a mechanism to channel private sector investment in public education, and there is a clear consensus on program goals and components between AMCHAM/DR and the private sector sponsors. However, while the sponsors perceive their relationship with the program in positive terms, AMCHAM/DR’s role at the school level is undifferentiated and not attributable. School directors perceive sponsorship as valuable but do not associate it with comprehensive educational interventions.

BEP utilizes commercially available training programs for improving teacher performance. The training addresses many of the same principles as ESP, but without strong integrated program management, and

² Only two of the components, school sponsorship interventions and assessment, monitoring and evaluation are included in this evaluation.

as a result minimal effect on learning in the classroom. The human resources that BEP will be able to dedicate to programmatic management in the future are unclear. For example, BEP does not have the internal capacity for classroom accompaniment. The program's point of contact in the school is the director, and classroom support is seen as the task of the director. The interventions often are perceived as *ad hoc*.³

The two programs also have very distinct levels of monitoring and evaluation capacity. The ESP has made a substantial investment in monitoring change in student achievement, with baseline and control group comparisons over time. Statistical analysis is possible. In contrast, BEP's written records are insufficient for effective implementation of the M&E plan. For example, evaluators were unable to ascertain the number and timing of interventions by school. No baseline information is available to measure the change in effect over time for teachers or students. There are efforts underway to address this shortcoming. The evaluators can conclude that BEP has good intentions, and is responsible and diligent in managing resources but, with the current design it funnels resources with minimal capacity to add value.

Efficiency. As agreed, the evaluation team did not conduct cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis as a part of the mid-term evaluation. In their own ways, both programs are generally operating efficiently.

The ESP is perceived as systematic, organized, and efficient by the private sector, MINERD, and the teachers and directors. It is generally efficient in administration although some weaknesses were identified. It is implemented as an integrated program in which some elements, especially materials, are perceived as expensive. The evaluation corroborates the importance of the core components that support teacher training, especially materials, student textbooks, and accompaniment. Efficiency losses are present in systems for materials distribution and in teacher training (due to frequent teacher rotation among schools.)

BEP is designed to be efficient in utilizing private sector resources at the lowest administrative cost. But while it is an efficient means to move funds it is not clear that it is efficient in delivery of services in the schools, due to centrally defined intervention plans with insufficient capacity to attend to school-specific requirements and minimal monitoring of implementation and results. AMCHAM/DR has become very efficient in channeling funds into donations to the schools, but the donation of materials is not an intervention that is easily linked to educational outcomes. In addition, AMCHAM/DR makes decisions about the type of educational interventions to use based on administrative costs rather than in terms of the best educational value for the private sector sponsor and USAID investment. The clearest example of the effect of this criterion is the decision to not utilize the PUCMM model in the BEP schools.

Sustainability. The evaluation team has approached the question of sustainability on two tracks. The first is to determine if program interventions are likely to be sustained after USAID's involvement in the program. The second is to ascertain if the package of interventions produces sustainable change in learning outcomes.

The ESP strives to create change in teacher behavior to increase student learning. Will this change endure with the continued use of the new pedagogical strategies in the classrooms? The evaluation concludes that it is likely that this change is sustainable IF there is a community of support in the school and the material resources, especially the textbooks, are available. A second aspect of sustainability is

³ BEP is instituting a new programmatic approach effective with this school-year that may address some of these challenges.

the availability of alternative public and private institutional options for program continuation and expansion. Evidence suggests that both public and private institutions will invest in the ESP, but tradeoffs may be made in program content with potential sacrifices in terms of quality.

For BEP, since AMCHAM/DR has the support of private sector sponsorship of schools as part of its organization plan, the program is likely to be continued by AMCHAM/DR. The question of sustainability in BEP reflects the same disconnect between the mechanism and the educational outcomes that appear in the performance and efficiency results. Private sector involvement in sponsorship, working through AMCHAM/DR is on track to be sustainable but without a clear strategy for intervention in the schools, BEP may sustain interventions without achieving improvements in education. Access to materials and teacher training are necessary but not sufficient to change behavior.

The key recommendations from these two evaluations are:

ESP

- Continue to implement the program as designed and exercise caution in shifting resources for expansion demands; in particular maintain the classroom visits to teachers and school visits to directors.
- Ensure that materials are reproduced and delivered and trainings are offered focusing on their use, especially the mathematics textbooks, literacy workbooks, and classroom libraries.
- Create a user friendly systematized document of the ESP experience with project components and findings from evaluations and studies. Disseminate the product.
- The ESP should seek opportunities to collaborate across components at the project and at the school level.
- Concentrate project activities directly with parents and directors at the school level to sustain ESP interventions and achievements; consider expanding Mothers and Fathers in Action.
- Ensure student evaluations and teacher evaluations are implemented, analyzed and results disseminated to all levels of the education system to inform decision making; hire someone locally to respond to ongoing M&E needs.

BEP

- BEP should improve the coordination its activities at the school-level with the various organizations working in each school, build its relationship with the Ministry, brand and focus its interventions, and measure results.
- Lessons learned from this evaluation related to ESP should be examined broadly and include BEP and the sponsors to focus its model on a niche..

Lessons Learned from the ARYC Experience⁴

The Out of School and At Risk Youth and Children Program (ARYC) was implemented through five small, short-term grants for localized activities tailored to circumstances of youth and the opportunities for continued education or formal employment in that community. The programs demonstrate a demand for programs for at-risk youth – four of the five activities served more young people than their original targets, and several programs have continued in some form without USAID funding. They also demonstrate the value of designing activities to match the discrete and specific circumstances that young people are facing in their communities.

At the same time, there is no clear programmatic link between these activities and the formal education projects, or between these programs and the MINERD. While the objective is for young people to

⁴ The evaluation report for ARYC, which also includes the MLB-DDA and BCD projects, is in Annex C.

continue their education or increase their employability, these activities have operated as relatively isolated and intact programs. In addition, these activities, like others in the portfolio have limited monitoring and evaluation systems, and a reliance on output indicators.

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions for the Education Components of the BCD and MLB-DDA Projects

Unfortunately, little information was available to the evaluation team about the education-specific activities funded through the DDA and implemented by NGOs (World Vision, Save the Children, or the Dominican Institute for Integrated Development (IDDI). Like the ARYC grants they were implemented as stand-alone activities, demonstrating many of the same characteristics, strengths and short-comings. These projects do not appear to have links or impacts beyond the immediate community and direct beneficiaries.

The education component of the Batey Community Development project is more complex. The education component was designed as an integral part of the broader community development effort, with identified links to other programs in the community and to the MINERD. The four objectives of the component are improved infrastructure and materials, improved quality of primary school education, improved enrolment and attendance, and access to extra-curricular activities. A variety of resources have been applied to implementation including the use of project funds for infrastructure improvement, a MINERD school feeding program, creation of Espacios para Crecer (EpC) in the bateys with technical assistance from Entrena, a MINERD school directors' training program, and a contract with PUCMM for implementation of the ESP model in the batey schools.

The evaluation found evidence of significant improvement in school infrastructure, and increases in enrollment and attendance. According to anecdotal evidence, at least some of the EpCs continue to operate as extra-curricular activities without direct links to the batey schools. The most problematic part of the program has been the teacher training activity and the contract with PUCMM. After a recent assessment of the results from this training, which showed no improvement in student learning, the contract was terminated. The reasons for this termination are not fully documented but the evaluation attributes it at least in part to two factors – the failure to fully implement the model, and lack of flexibility in the ESP model to adapt to the unique circumstances of the batey schools.

Cross-cutting Evaluation of the Education Portfolio

The evaluation of the portfolio as a whole moves up a level from project implementation to examine cross-cutting elements in the program and general results of the USAID investment in basic education in the Dominican Republic. This analysis is built around the evaluation questions that were also applied at the project level.

Performance

The three elements identified in assessing portfolio performance are cross-cutting activity components, gender equality, and performance management.

Program components. The USAID/DR education strategy seeks to correct deficiencies in four areas – teacher effectiveness, community participation, resources, and policy. The projects evaluated include common activities designed to address these deficiencies. These common components include teacher training and coaching, school infrastructure and teaching materials, education management, non-formal education, and coordination.

- The project-level evaluations provide two essential findings about these components: (1) performance by component varies across projects; and (2) essential inter-relationships exist among components.

- The conclusion from comparisons across both formal and non-formal education projects is that an integrated package of interventions, grounded in understanding of student learning and the needs of educators, is necessary to produce change in educational outcomes.

Gender Equality. All of the project evaluations addressed gender considerations in their design and analysis. None of the projects has a gender strategy. Women predominate throughout the basic education system and in the non-formal education programs – as students, active parents, teachers, and directors. As students, girls achieve on a par or better than boys. Further, despite direct questions and probing, gender-related issues were not identified as concerns in the schools, with one exception. Various key informants suggested that the dominance of women in the education system reflects cultural stereotypes and socialization that emphasize obedience, study and responsibility for girls, and more *macho* behaviors for boys like independence and defiance. Gender relations also were identified as a factor in school violence and discipline problems, particularly in relation to family-based violence directed at women and children. The only activity that addresses this issue is the pilot Safe Schools component of the ESP. The external evaluation of this pilot experience, which is in process, should provide additional insights to USAID/DR for gender integration in future education programs.

Performance Monitoring. Monitoring indicators over time is the basis for tracking activity progress, and monitoring data is essential input to project evaluation. With baseline measures, outcome indicators measure the degree of change in project results, and the contribution of a particular activity to program results.

- There is a lack of baseline measures in most of the education portfolio and a reliance almost entirely on output indicators for reporting.
- The deficiencies in the performance monitoring plans limit the capacity of the evaluation team and of the Mission to document results that are outcomes of their investments, and to make quantitative comparisons among projects relative to the education assistance objective.

Efficiency

The question of efficiency at the level of the portfolio examines (1) the relative benefits of repeating various program components, relatively independently, across projects, and (2) the extent to which the portfolio is an integrated program, where the results are greater than the sum of the individual activities.

- The ESP (and the EpCs) have demonstrated the value of the application of an integrated package of components in formal and non-formal education settings respectively. There are potential efficiency gains in applying these models to USAID projects in other schools/settings.
- Significant difficulties have emerged in the attempts to utilize these models by BEP and by the BCD project.
- Analysis and negotiation of these difficulties are needed to realize this efficiency, particularly in light of the program requirements of the new USAID Education Strategy.
- The absence of successful transfer of these models to other projects limits the overall program impact of the portfolio. Without these links, the parts of the program – e.g. ESP and BEP – stand alone and the effects are bounded by the schools in which they operate. Operational links do not exist between the non-formal education activities and the formal education projects, and any program level integrated results are fortuitous rather than planned.

Sustainability

To what extent does the USAID/DR education portfolio contribute to improved quality of education in the country as a whole? Does the coordination between the USAID/DR portfolio and other initiatives and institutions in the basic education system provide the basis for institutionalization of the program without USAID funding?

- The ESP model has been adopted by MINERD and by the Fundación INICIA for expansion into additional schools and districts.
- BEP has demonstrated significant potential to expand and pull in additional private sector support and involvement in public education throughout the country.
- Some of the non-formal education programs funded by USAID under ARYC have continued to operate effectively at the local level after termination of USAID funding.
- Any interconnections among the various programs and projects being implemented with USAID support appear to be accidental and isolated rather than the result of integration of the USAID portfolio into the institutional structure of the basic education system. The potential exists for sharing of lessons and bringing together education specialists across the USAID portfolio.

Portfolio Evaluation Recommendations

- **Recommendation #1:** *To achieve an integrated and focused approach to early grade learning for USAID interventions, the Mission should facilitate direct interaction between the programs it supports (ESP and BEP), with the objective of establishing a mechanism for the adoption of the ESP model in the BEP supported schools if BEP's focus continues to be direct support in reading and mathematics.*
- **Recommendation #2:** *To build sustainability and strengthen the country's education system, the Mission should develop a coordinated approach to its interventions by engaging with MINERD and the broader set of institutions involved in the basic education system nationally.*
- **Recommendation #3:** *To better measure the contribution of activities to the expected results of USAID interventions, the Mission should develop a comprehensive Performance Management Plan for the Education development objective that includes a monitoring framework and technical assistance to assure that results are defined in terms of outcomes and impacts.*
- **Recommendation #4:** *To reduce the impact of gender and violence in schools and the imbalance in participation and achievement in the education system, the Mission should prepare a gender analysis of the education sector with the implementing partners so the results are reflected in project design and monitoring and evaluation.*
- **Recommendation #5:** *Going forward, if small grants to local organizations are used they should meet the requirements of the USAID Education Strategy to have "demonstrably high impact on policy reform, system strengthening, program integration or pilot innovation."*

Acronyms

AmCham	American Chamber of Commerce
ARYC	At-Risk Youth and Children
BCD	Batey Community Development
BEP	Basic Education Program
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DR	Dominican Republic
DREAM	Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project
EDUCA	Acción para la Educación Básica (In English, Action for Basic Education)
EpC	Espacios para Crecer
EpE	Espacios para Emprender
ESP	Effective Schools Program
GODR	Government of the Dominican Republic
IDDI	Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral
IR	Intermediate Result
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MINERD	Ministry of Education
MLB-DDA	Major League Baseball-Dominican Development Alliance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PPL/LER	Policy, Planning and Learning office of Learning, Evaluation and Research
PUCMM	Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra
SRGBV	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Mid-term Performance Evaluation is to provide a single, integrated evaluation of the USAID/Dominican Republic (USAID/DR) education portfolio. The USAID/DR education portfolio is focused on improvement in the quality of basic education (Assistance Objective), particularly in grades one through four. Improvement in quality will be achieved through three Intermediate Results (IRs): improved student performance in reading and math in grades 1 to 4 (IR1); strengthened community and private sector involvement in education (IR2); and increased learning opportunities for at-risk youth (IR3). The integrated evaluation of the portfolio draws on performance evaluations of the key projects tied to each of the three intermediate results. All activities are administered through grants.

1.1 Description of the USAID/DR Education Portfolio

The current education portfolio consists of two central projects, which began in September 2009 and will continue until September 2014. The Effective Schools Program (ESP), implemented by the *Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra* (PUCMM), focuses on early grade reading, writing and math through improved pedagogy, as well as education management and safe schools. The Basic Education Program (BEP) is a public-private partnership that seeks to support comprehensive, coordinated, and systematic interventions in selected public schools through an alliance between the Ministry of Education (MINERD) and the private sector, managed and implemented by the American Chamber of Commerce in the Dominican Republic (AMCHAM/DR). The evaluation of these two projects is the core of the integrated report.

In addition to these two projects, the evaluation includes three other activities. The recently completed Out-of-School and At-Risk Youth and Children (ARYC) program was operated through a series of short-term grants to national and international NGOs, for localized activities that increase the educational options for young people at risk of abandoning school. These five grants to the Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project (DREAM), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), *Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral* (IDDI), Counterpart International, and Alfalit are examined with particular attention to the lessons learned from these experiences for the new At-Risk Youth activity initiated during the course of the fieldwork for this evaluation.

Finally, the integrated evaluation also draws on an examination of the education component of two projects implemented by the USAID/DR Program Office. These projects are the Major League Baseball–Dominican Development Alliance (MLB-DDA) and Batey Community Development (BCD). The MLB-DDA ended in September 2012, while the grant for the BCD project continues until June 2013. The BCD education component includes activities that contribute to both IR1, improved student learning in reading and mathematics and IR3, increased learning opportunities for at-risk youth. The diverse activities supported under the MLB-DDA are linked to education primarily through projects for at-risk youth.

1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Questions

The mid-term performance evaluation of the education portfolio has two principal objectives: to identify mid-course corrections for the Effective Schools and Basic Education projects; and, to inform the Mission's new education strategy in setting priorities among programs and components for cost-effective use of Mission resources.

The evaluation is organized around three broad questions, which are applied first to each of the component projects and then at the level of the education portfolio as a whole. The definition of these questions at the project level is:

- (1) **Performance.** The extent to which the project is on track to produce the expected results, and the contribution of these results to improved quality of basic education are the first questions to be asked of a mid-term evaluation. Adjustments often can be made at this point to correct the weaknesses identified.
- (2) **Efficiency.** Efficiency measures utilization of resources relative to results. In this case, the evaluation is not intended to analyze budget or cost data. The analysis of efficiency identifies core aspects of the projects that are essential to the overall objective. What changes could be made in the implementation of the project so that it operates more smoothly and effectively?
- (3) **Sustainability.** Various factors will affect whether the project could continue without USAID assistance. The task of the mid-term evaluation is to examine these factors and recommend adjustments that will increase the probability of sustainability. In addition, it is important to identify which program components are the most and least sustainable in terms of government, private sector, and beneficiary support for the activities.

At the portfolio level these questions are applied to factors that cut across the individual programs to define the USAID/DR education portfolio as a whole.

(1) Performance.

- Program components: USAID/DR has identified deficiencies that contribute to poor quality in education in four areas – teacher effectiveness, community participation, resources, and policy. Common components to address these deficiencies are present in multiple projects. The integrated evaluation examines the relative performance of these components across projects.
 - Gender equality: According to USAID policy, all activities should support gender equality, and the USAID/DR education strategy states that boys and girls should benefit equally. The integrated evaluation will examine attention to gender considerations in the portfolio.
 - Performance monitoring: Monitoring project indicators throughout the life of a project is the basis for tracking whether the activities are on track. Monitoring data also is essential input to project evaluations. With baseline measures, outcome indicators measure the degree of change in key project results. Indicators also may provide a basis for assessing the contribution of a particular activity to program results. The integrated evaluation will discuss monitoring as a tool in assessing the USAID/DR education portfolio
- (2) Efficiency:** The integrated evaluation will raise two questions about efficiency in the portfolio as a whole: (1) What are the relative benefits of repeating various components across projects, as opposed for example to specialization; and (2) To what extent do the projects in the portfolio form an integrated program? Is the effect of the package greater than the individual activities?
- (3) Sustainability:** To what extent does the USAID/DR education portfolio contribute to improved quality of education in the country as a whole? Is the coordination between the USAID/DR education portfolio and other key actors in the system (especially MINERD, NGOs, private sector) sufficient to impact the system through development of pilot programs or models for activities to counter the systemic deficiencies and to provide a basis for institutionalization of the programs without donor funding?

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation utilizes a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. The team began with a review of project documentation provided by the Mission for the five programs/projects. These

documents provide the description, purpose, and results frameworks for the activities in the portfolio and reports of monitoring indicators through the course of activities. For some projects, additional documents were received from implementing organizations during the course of the data collection. The documents are a source of both quantitative and qualitative data by project.

The second source of data is semi-structured interviews with key informants associated with each project. Key informants include staff from the project implementing organizations, other stakeholders associated with the projects and with other institutions in the basic education system (such as officials of the Ministry of Education, representatives of BEP private sector sponsors, USAID and other donors, and NGOs or enterprises providing education services), and direct and indirect beneficiaries (including school directors and other administrative staff, teachers, parents, students, and district technical staff of the Ministry). In some cases, especially with parents and students, group interviews were used. Most interviews were in-person, based on an open-ended standardized interview protocol. These interviews were used to gather descriptive and qualitative information about the projects.

A third key source of quantitative and qualitative data is school visits, which included on-site interviews with school personnel and teachers and classroom observation. The schools visited were selected randomly (to the extent possible) from the lists of schools targeted by the ESP, BEP, and BCD project. A total of 36 schools were visited (24 from the ESP, 10 from the BEP, and two from the BCD project); during three weeks of data collection in October 2012, the team completed a total of 49 interviews with teachers, 37 interviews with directors, and 60 classrooms observed. The team used a uniform format for each visit, which included interviews with the school director (or in his/her absence, the sub-director or coordinator) and with teachers receiving training from the USAID-supported programs, and a half-hour observation in the classrooms of these teachers. In a few cases, the schools assisted in convening parents and/or students for discussion with the team as well. The same interview schedules and classroom observation format also was used in all schools to gather comparable data across programs. The results of the interviews and classroom observation were tabulated, providing both quantitative and qualitative measures of behavior in the schools and the classrooms. The detailed description of the school selection process, interview and observation tools, and tabulation of the findings are included in Annex F.

Finally, the team carried out a detailed statistical analysis of the ESP student achievement database provided to the team by the ESP monitoring and evaluation unit. The statistical analysis is used to answer the question of the extent to which the literacy and mathematics components of the program are meeting the impact objective of improved student learning in grades one through four. Comparisons are made between students in ESP and non-ESP schools. The analysis focuses on differences in achievement by sex, years of participation, and rural vs. urban location, as well as the problems related to over-age students. The complete report on the results of this analysis is found in Annex B. Selected results are reported in the ESP evaluation report.

Primary data analysis was done by program/project for each evaluation. As in the case of data collection, the analysis process was similar across projects to facilitate comparisons and the cross-cutting assessment of the portfolio. The mixed methods evaluation approach relies on a process of triangulation in analysis whereby various sources of qualitative and quantitative data are brought to bear to establish the findings and conclusions for each of the evaluation questions. The analysis in the cross-cutting evaluation draws on the findings and conclusions of the individual program/project evaluations as the input for its higher level findings and conclusions. As indicated in each project evaluation report, the recommendations flow directly from the conclusions.

2. Summary of Program/Project Level Findings, Conclusions, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations

Each of the project evaluations (for ESP, BEP, and ARYC, BCD, MLB-DDA) as well as the statistical annex for the ESP database for student achievement was prepared as a stand-alone report, and includes a detailed examination of the evidence supporting the findings about each project and the conclusions and recommendations that emerge from these findings. The project evaluations include information on the project background, components, geographic coverage, beneficiaries, and finances, as well as appendices showing analysis of field data, persons interviewed, and documents consulted. These reports are found in Annexes A through D. The conclusions and recommendations for the portfolio evaluations are based on these project evaluations.

This section summarizes the findings and conclusions from the mid-term evaluations of the two principal projects, as the foundation for the integrated report. The findings are organized by evaluation question to highlight potential cross-cutting patterns. The final part of this section, lists the recommendations/lessons learned from the project evaluations. These recommendations are important because they feed into the portfolio recommendations and because they can be acted upon directly by the implementers and USAID. The recommendations in a mid-term evaluation generally are intended to guide mid-course adjustments to increase effectiveness and results.

The detailed questions developed to guide the response to the broad evaluation questions about performance, efficiency, and sustainability are spelled out in Box 1.

Box 1: Evaluation Questions for Project Evaluations

Performance: These questions are designed to assist USAID to make mid-course corrections and to expand/replicate components or activities that are working well.

- Which project components are being implemented and where?
- How are they being implemented? What are the characteristics of the implementing environment?
- Who is benefiting (disaggregated by sex, region, and position), and to what degree?
- Is the project on track for meeting the targets identified in the PMP?
- For stakeholders interviewed, what is the perception of each component? If there is evidence from classroom observation, what is the relationship between observations and perceptions?

Efficiency: The questions related to efficiency are structured to help USAID identify core aspects of the projects that are essential to the overall objective.

- What are the aspects of the projects that are operating more or less efficiently and why?
- What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for efficiency in implementation?
- How can the design, management and execution become more efficient in achieving program goals?

Sustainability: As a mid-term evaluation the questions related to sustainability identify opportunities and recommendations for adjustments to increase the probability of sustainability.

- Which program components (as activities and interventions) are the most and least sustainable, and why?
- Does the private sector/GODR believe the program is important enough to be supported by them?
- Do program beneficiaries believe that the benefits are important enough that they will continue seeking services?

2.1. ESP and BEP Mid-Term Evaluations—Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

2.1.1. Effective Schools Program (ESP)

The ESP has four program components (in-service teacher training for literacy, mathematics, and curriculum development; education management; safe schools; and, monitoring and evaluation), which are implemented in their entirety in five school districts. Other districts, selected in collaboration with the MINERD, receive one or more components. See Annex A for a detailed report with findings, conclusions, recommendations and supporting documentation.

Findings & Conclusions: ESP

Performance

The ESP integrated approach to quality education with a foundation in improving teacher competencies in literacy and mathematics demonstrates clear effects in the classroom. Actual adoption of new strategies and techniques in the classroom is a process, and implementation varies. Both classroom level support (accompaniment) and textbooks stand out as key factors in achieving results. Based on classroom observations, it appears teachers are in the process of applying the strategies and methodologies in the classroom. Some strategies, for example designing classroom walls, are easier to implement than others. The key performance conclusions and findings that are further analyzed in Annex A are presented in Tables 1-6 by the ESP components.

Table 1: ESP Conclusions and Findings: Performance in Literacy and Mathematics

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>ESP#1: Classroom level support visits are important to developing teacher competencies.</p> <p>ESP#2: The district level technicians have not developed competencies on par with project staff in order to assume the support role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers attribute to their development of literacy competencies to ESP interventions, emphasizing the importance of accompaniment visits from technical staff because they mitigate feelings of isolation. Visits from district-level technical staff have been less effective in this support role than those from the ESP technical staff.
<p>ESP#3: Teachers and administrators perceive the literacy component intervention strategies as effective in strengthening student learning and assessment results largely confirm that they do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently, teachers and directors, reflect that students are motivated and interested to learn reading and writing. They attribute the changes in the students to the new methodologies, which lead in turn to improved student learning in reading and writing. Statistical analysis of assessment data shows statistically significant differences in student learning in literacy (see Annex B).
<p>ESP#4: Teachers are in the process of applying the strategies and methodologies in the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers develop materials and they are seen in the classroom. Of the classrooms observed (n=42) 50 percent had relevant, age appropriate materials on the walls that were created by the teacher and students. Forty-six percent of the classrooms observed had at least one Learning Corner. None of the teachers were observed dictating to students. (See Annex A for additional classroom observation data).

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<i>ESP#5: The project has not provided sufficient evidence to determine if teacher capacity has improved, however it is an important issue to address given the low levels of teacher capacity evidenced.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant interviews revealed that teachers have low capacity in terms of content knowledge of the mathematics curriculum. Findings from an anonymous assessment administered to a sample of teachers in the mathematics Saturday trainings yielded similar findings. However, the assessment was only administered once, so the results provide no indication of whether there has been a change in teacher content knowledge.
<i>ESP#6: Teachers have improved their planning of the annual teaching program; however deficiencies (content knowledge) remain in implementation of the overall program.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers have and use plans. Teachers struggle to implement their plans in the time allocated.
<i>ESP#7: Teachers create lesson plans based on the efficient time management program; they require reinforcement to ensure that plans are implemented as designed.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seventy-five percent of teachers observed had developed a lesson plan; with variation in terms of if they relied on them heavily, referred occasionally or did not use it at all.
<i>ESP#8: Teachers value the materials and strategies but in application they use a mixed traditionalist/ constructivist approach.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and directors frequently referred the ESP mathematics materials and their importance.
<i>ESP#9: The mathematics textbooks are a fundamental ingredient to the teaching of mathematics.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom observations confirm that students are motivated to learn mathematics; the fear of mathematics has been dissipated. Teachers rely on the mathematics textbooks, in classroom observations during mathematics classes (n=21), nearly 70 percent of the observations indicated that all students used textbooks; the exception was in Herrera (1505).

The Education Management Component piloted the “Quality Management” model developed by the MINERD, with the objective of strengthening school governance by working with district directors, technicians, school directors and parents’ associations in four districts (1503, 1505, 0803, 1603). Director training was well received. Providing support and training through district technicians was not effective.

Table 2: ESP Conclusions and Findings: Performance in Education Management

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p><i>ESP#10: The direct intervention approach of trainings to school directors is more effective than the cascade model via district technicians.</i></p> <p><i>ESP#11: Given the administrative demands on directors and on districts; it is more effective for project technical staff to provide accompaniment directly to directors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School directors reflect on the trainings they receive and associate them with their ability to perform their roles as directors. School directors infrequently identify district technical staff as supporting them in the management of their schools. District technical staff who participate in the Education Management component have multiple additional responsibilities (e.g., one district technician indicated that she supported over 50 schools in addition to the schools she worked with for the Education Management component).

The focus of the Safe Schools intervention is to integrate students, teachers, parents and community members in the process of addressing School-Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV). The program was piloted in two districts Herrera, Santo Domingo (1505) and Jarabacoa, La Vega (0603) in a total of 41 schools.

Table 3: ESP Conclusions and Findings: Performance for Safe Schools

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>ESP#12: Youth discuss themes related to the rights of the child with ease; sensitive themes in the Safe Schools curriculum require time, trust, and the appropriate cultural context to develop.</p> <p>ESP#13: The Safe Schools program, through its broad based approach to community involvement, has the potential to influence student learning through addressing discipline and violence problems that plague homes, communities and schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth easily discuss the rights of the child and they are most confident and comfortable discussing this area of the program. • Youth are not as familiar or do not feel comfortable discussing other areas addressed in the Safe Schools curriculum, for example, SRGBV.

The Monitoring and Evaluation component is designed to “assess the impact of the different program components on students’ learning... and to provide valid and reliable information for feedback and refinement of program processes.” It also is designed to provide the MINERD with information to make decisions.

Table 4: ESP Conclusions and Findings: Performance in Monitoring & Evaluation

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>ESP#14: There has been no rigorous evaluation of teacher knowledge of mathematics or reading comprehension to date to detect change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was one anonymous evaluation of teachers in mathematics conducted with a sample of teachers who participate in the Saturday mathematics program, using a test for students and no evaluation of teachers in reading comprehension.
<p>ESP#15: The MINERD has the capacity to build plans for evaluation, testing, measurement and analysis; the challenge is having enough human capital resources to implement them simultaneously.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently the Direction of Evaluation is conducting three assessments simultaneously; international assessments (UNESCO), assessments for graduation, and assessments with a sample of schools to compare the three interventions (ESP, OEI, and POVEDA). • INOFOCAM is developing a scholarship program with input from the ESP Monitoring and Evaluation component for university students to study testing and evaluation.

Efficiency

ESP has the reputation of being systematic and organized. It does what it says it will do. Some losses in efficiency occur as a result of delayed delivery of materials, especially textbooks, and due to the recurrent training required because of turnover and rotation of teachers. Some observers from the private sector and MINERD see the materials as expensive and perhaps underutilized.

Table 5: ESP Conclusions and Findings: Efficiency

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>ESP#16: There are tradeoffs in working independently; efficiency or outputs are not maximized to their potential from project collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each ESP component operates autonomously, which allows the components to be adjusted to specific needs of each school. For example, components can adapt training programs or adjust to changes in ministry policies.
<p>ESP#17: The ESP administration is efficient, but can be improved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews with the private sector and the MINERD consistently noted that the ESP is systematic, organized, and efficient. • There are challenges in accessing reliable and accurate administrative information about the program.
<p>ESP#18: To ensure the efficiency of materials they must be distributed and used in classrooms.</p> <p>ESP#19: There are efficiency loses when teachers leave schools. At the same time the ESP may be under representing some efficiency gains with regard to the benefits of teachers trained in their program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a perception that materials are costly, as reflected in key informant interviews with the private sector and with the MINERD. • It is crucial to note that materials have been purchased that have not been distributed to schools or are underutilized in schools. • Teachers leave their teaching positions frequently. • For available data from teacher interviews over 63 percent of teachers taught in more than one session.

Sustainability

The ESP evaluation examines the question first in terms of whether the changes in individual behavior resulting from the program (strategies for pedagogy) will continue, responding with a qualified “yes.” Teachers participate in a professional program implemented by a highly esteemed university in the DR; it becomes a part of their professional career trajectory. Key informant interviews and teachers confirm that the program is different from a sporadic training, and is recognized with either a certificate or a diploma which are acknowledged in the national teachers’ competitions for teaching positions. Teachers are convinced of the learning benefits of the methodology and like using it. Continued use of the methods will be strengthened by a community of support in the school and accompaniment visits.

Table 6: ESP Conclusions and Findings: Sustainability

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>ESP#20: Teachers are committed to sustaining the interventions in literacy and mathematics and they do; especially when they have a community of support.</p> <p>ESP#21: Teachers will need material resources, for example textbooks, in order to sustain the approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are convinced of learning benefits of the ESP methodologies (in both subject areas) and are committed to implementing them. Teachers appear to continue to implement ESP strategies even when the interventions are complete.
<p>ESP#22: Aspects of the ESP program can be sustained; however tradeoffs will be made resulting in sacrifices in terms of quality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MINERD has requested the expansion of the program and uses its own resources coupled with donor funds to expand the program in the Northern region. • MINERD has limited funds for expansion activities.

<p>ESP#23: In order to garner resources programs including ESP need to conduct rigorous evaluations and disseminate findings.</p> <p>ESP #24: It is unlikely funds to support ESP will come from IDB. MINERD will need to use its own resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is apprehension about funding programs on a national scale that have not been rigorously evaluated. • IDB funds have been used to support expansion of the ESP program however there are concerns about funding programs without evaluation; future IDB funding will focus on infrastructure.
<p>ESP#25: The private sector can be included in the expansion of the program through convincing them of the program and its results.</p> <p>ESP#26: The relationship can be a partnership between PUCMM, the private sector actor, and the MINERD in order to maximize results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundación INICIA supported the ESP because they were presented with results and were convinced by the program's methods.
<p>ESP#27: There is a disconnect between the perception of teachers, directors and parents about parents' role in their children's education.</p> <p>ESP #28: Parents want to help their children succeed in school; they require a supportive school community context and training to be able to do so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During interviews teachers and directors consistently argue that lack of parental participation is the source for school problems and a challenge for achieving mathematic and literacy goals. • Interviews with parents suggest that in many cases parents do participate in their children's education, through in school and at home activities

Recommendations: ESP

This section draws together the findings and conclusions from performance, efficiency and sustainability into six coherent recommendations for the duration of the project and one recommendation for future consideration. They include:

ESP Recommendation #1: Continue to implement the program as designed and exercise caution in shifting resources for expansion demands; in particular maintain the classroom visits to teachers and school visits to directors.

ESP Recommendation #2: Ensure that materials are reproduced and delivered and trainings are offered focusing on their use, especially the mathematics textbooks, literacy workbooks, and classroom libraries.

ESP Recommendation #3: Create a user-friendly systematized document of the ESP experience with project components and findings from evaluations and studies. Disseminate the product.

ESP Recommendation #4: Seek additional collaboration across ESP components at the project and school levels.

ESP Recommendation #5: Concentrate project activities directly with parents and directors at the school level to sustain ESP interventions and achievements; consider expanding Mothers and Fathers in Action⁵.

⁵ The Mothers and Fathers in Action program, in which parents received trainings on how to help their students at home, was piloted under the Education Management component.

ESP Recommendation #6: Ensure student evaluations and teacher evaluations are implemented, analyzed and results disseminated to all levels of the education system to inform decision-making; hire someone locally to respond to ongoing M&E needs.

2.1.2. Basic Education Program (BEP)

The evaluation of BEP includes two of the four program components, the interventions in the schools and the ability of the program to monitor and evaluate these interventions. The other two BEP components concerning the extent and nature of the private sector sponsorship relationship are the subject of a separate AMCHAM/DR assessment.

The evidence about program performance is drawn from document review, interviews with key informants in AMCHAM/DR, the private sector sponsoring organizations, and other stakeholders in the basic education system (see Annex C). The findings and conclusions in the project evaluation indicate the essential role of AMCHAM/DR in motivating and directing private sector support for improved basic education, successfully generating private sector funds for the schools and providing guidance for investing funds in education programming rather than secondary activities often associated with sponsorship. At the same time, shortcomings are identified in the actual implementation and particularly in record-keeping and monitoring.

Findings & Conclusions

Performance

Measuring performance and attributing interventions to BEP’s actions at the school level faced several contextual and programmatic constraints. On the one hand, BEP operates across the three regional divisions that MINERD has defined for director and teacher interventions. In addition, BEP’s record-keeping was a significant barrier to understanding what interventions had been delivered in each school. Based on these contextual and program-specific constraints, the evaluation team focused on attempting to ascertain if teachers are adapting new methodologies and if they perceive BEP as a reason for the change. According to teacher interviews and classroom observations, teachers recognized some of these innovative methodologies as effective and nearly universally expressed interest in using more participatory teaching methods. The key performance conclusions and findings that are further analyzed in Annex C are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: BEP Conclusions and Findings: Performance

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>BEP#1: BEP has yet to achieve a critical benchmark as outlined in the program purpose: a “comprehensive, coordinated, and systematic intervention” plan. AMCHAM/DR’s role at the school level is undifferentiated and attribution of AMCHAM/DR assistance is (and will likely always be) un-attributable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When asked to name institutions that had provided them training during 2012, the majority of the directors mentioned AMCHAM/DR and the sponsor among several actors. • Teachers were less likely than the directors to recognize AMCHAM/DR or the sponsor by name when asked an open-ended question.

<p>BEP#2: BEPs written records are insufficient for effective monitoring of the M&E Plan or to achieve “an outreach and communication plan to promote the results of the sponsored interventions. (BEP Results Framework, Component 4).</p>	<p>Missing data include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of teachers trained, disaggregated by school, intervention type. • Exact timing of interventions in each school. • Extent to which the training has changed teachers' actions in the classroom. • Number of students, disaggregated by school, who benefit from USAID's and the sponsor's financial support.
<p>BEP#3: While BEP uses standard methods to train teachers to improve pedagogy, these generic methods rely heavily on strong program management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMCHAM/DR has outsourced its technical assistance to a series of vendors. • Classroom observations demonstrated that students participated in class. (Appendix C-2). • The use of more advanced techniques, such as having the teacher demonstrate physically or with materials, or having students role play were used very infrequently. (Figure 1 in Appendix C-2.)
<p>BEP#4: The implementing environment is a challenge for the structure of BEP. To date, AMCHAM/DR has not defined a clear mechanism for ensuring coordination at the school level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors and teachers are not able to express in a dialogue how the various entities (POVEDA, MINERD, BEP) are or are not coordinated. In some cases, they were concerned about getting too much advice. • AMCHAM/DR reports to sponsors give detail about what has been done, but sponsors make decisions about what is going on in the school based on their own visits rather than AMCHAM/DR reports.

This lack of attribution when compared to the interviews at the school-level for ESP was striking to the evaluation team. The implication or conclusion is that while planning between AMCHAM/DR and the sponsor has improved, the legacy of the ad-hoc interventions of the early years of the cooperative agreement remain. This lack of congruence between plans and observations has important potential consequences for the model. All of the sponsors interviewed (representing 32 of the 51 schools included in the evaluation) stated that working through AMCHAM/DR was important because of AMCHAM/DR's knowledge of education. The value-added proposition for AMCHAM/DR for the sponsor is the ability to develop, implement, and monitor a “comprehensive, coordinated, and systematic” intervention to improve the quality of basic education in the public schools of the Dominican Republic. To date, it is not clear that this type of program exists.

Efficiency

BEP was designed to be an efficient mechanism to engage private sector support for public basic education through corporate social responsibility programming. In this case, efficiency is measured by administrative cost as a proportion of the private sector sponsor's annual budget. Efficiency in these terms is achieved through a very small AMCHAM/DR administrative staff and competitive contracting of services for the schools, which generates inefficiencies in achieving quality education objectives in implementation in the schools.

Efficiency is a valid metric. However, efficiency *for what* is the key question. AMCHAM/DR has made decisions about the type of interventions based on administrative costs versus best value for the private sector sponsor and USAID investment. The clearest example of this is the decision to not utilize the PUCMM model for improving learning outcomes in reading or coordinating BEP's interventions with

POVEDA. The BEP interventions have been efficient, but the question remains: *is AMCHAM/DR adding value?*

Table 8: BEP Conclusions and Findings: Efficiency

Conclusions	Summary Findings
BEP#5: While an efficient means to move funds, the focus on donation has dominated engagement with the school. It is unclear if the per student cost ⁶ for BEP is efficient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to key informant interviews, donation of materials is the most efficient type of intervention, and the most utilized.
BEP#6: BEP's management organization for its files obfuscates what is happening at the school-level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMCHAM/DR has organized its operations around the principles of outsourcing and financial management. Files are structured to respond to budgetary and financial management questions. This is efficient for the management of the cooperative agreement, but obfuscates programmatic management.
BEP#7: The interventions have been defined and implemented but without an analysis of their results (to date).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMCHAM/DR has a very small staff with the director, one programmatic professional (education coordinator), an administrative/financial staff member, and a driver.
BEP#8: Most (but not all) of BEP's attention is focused on addressing what teachers cite as the methodology and area in which they need assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMCHAM/DR has focused its teacher training on the most-cited problem of teachers (reading).

Sustainability

For the BEP evaluation the question of sustainability of behavior change for the teachers or for the students cannot be answered at this point due to lack of information on whether change has occurred. Teachers (and directors) do not perceive BEP as a coherent package of interventions and current monitoring tools are insufficient to measure what interventions have occurred in each school or their effect. On the other hand, there is a consensus that the private sector can contribute to improved quality of education and that a mechanism like BEP and AMCHAM/DR is needed to channel this contribution.

Table 9: BEP Conclusions and Findings: Sustainability

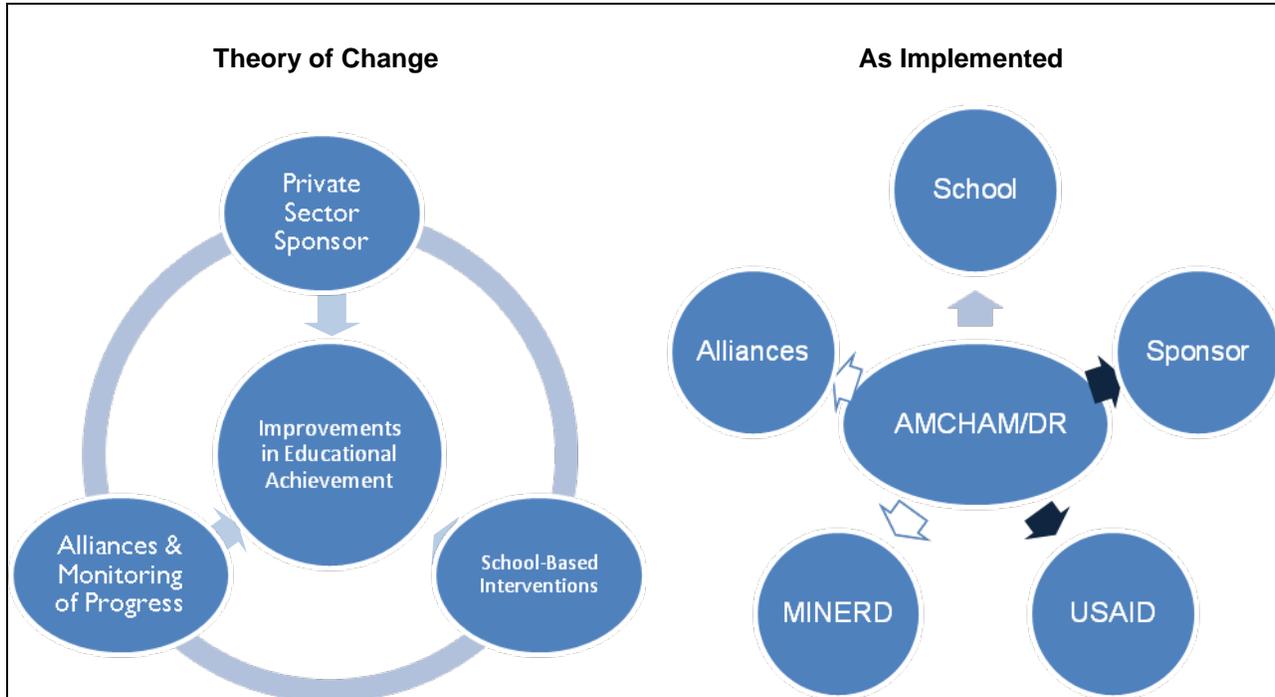
Conclusions	Summary of Findings
BEP#9: Private sector involvement as a sponsor and working through AMCHAM/DR is on track to be sustainable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The private sector partners are universal in their support for an entity to operate educational programs utilizing donated funds to meet their particular corporate social responsibility objectives.
BEP#10: Without a clear strategy for building a strategic alliance for intervention at the school-level, BEP may sustain interventions without achieving improvements in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry, AMCHAM/DR, and the sponsors have different definitions of a sustainable public-private strategic alliance for basic education.
BEP#11: Access to materials (equipment and didactic tools) and training of teachers are necessary but not sufficient conditions to change behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools have relevant didactic materials but it is an area of concern; materials exist but their use and incorporation into teaching is uneven.

⁶ This cannot be measured at this time due to the lack of data.

BEP Recommendations

The recommendations flow from the respective conclusions. The basic design of BEP is sufficiently clear and defined as illustrated below in the theory of change. This requires strong programmatic management and integration. In implementation, however, AMCHAM/DR has a strong relationship with the sponsor and USAID, a weaker relationship with the school, and a limited relationship with MINERD and other alliances. The comparison between the ideal (theory of change) and the current status is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: BEP at the Mid-Term Evaluation



This evaluation is one element of the current review of the USAID Education Portfolio and BEP. Consequently, the recommendations should be reviewed closely once the results of EGRA/EGMA baseline testing are received and the assessment of what motivates private sector sponsorship of schools is complete. Once USAID has the results of these two other tools, the evaluation team recommends that USAID address the following questions:

- Should the targets for the number of private sector partners be decreased?
- What is the right mix of donations (materials) and technical assistance for BEP?
- Should the programmatic purpose be updated to reflect a niche strategy for private sector sponsorship?

The recommendations are:

- **BEP Recommendation #1:** BEP should improve its coordination of its activities at the school-level with the various organizations working in each school, build its relationship with the Ministry, brand and focus its interventions on doing one or two interventions well, and measure results.
- **BEP Recommendation #2:** BEP should redesign its overall organizational and monitoring structure for its operations to be school-focused rather than vendor-focused.

- **BEP Recommendation #3:** Lessons learned from this evaluation related to ESP should be examined broadly and include BEP and the sponsors. The present analysis with other pending assessments should be utilized to define a niche for private sector support at the school level.
- **BEP Recommendation #4:** BEP should include in its assessment of private sector sponsorship a close examination of the role of strategic alliances.

2.2. Out-of-School and At-Risk Youth and Children (ARYC) - Performance and Lessons Learned⁷

The Out-of-School and At-Risk Youth and Children Program (ARYC) was implemented through five small, short-term grants for localized activities tailored to the circumstances of youth and the opportunities for continued education or formal employment in the community. The programs demonstrate a demand for programs for at-risk youth – four of the five activities served more young people than their original targets, and several programs have continued in some form without USAID funding. They also demonstrate the value of designing activities to match the discrete and specific circumstances that young people are facing in their communities.

At the same time, there is no clear programmatic link between these activities and the formal education projects, or between these programs and the MINERD. While the objective is for young people to continue their education or increase their employability, these activities have operated as relatively isolated and intact programs. In addition, these activities, like others in the portfolio have limited monitoring and evaluation systems, and a reliance on output indicators. Both of these factors limit the capacity.

2.3. Education Components of the Major League Baseball (MLB-DDA) and the Batey Community Development (BCD) Projects – Performance and Lessons Learned

Unfortunately, little information was available to the evaluation team about the education-specific activities funded through the DDA and implemented by NGOs (World Vision, Save the Children, or the Dominican Institute for Integrated Development (IDDI). Like the ARYC grants they were implemented as stand-alone activities, demonstrating many of the same characteristics, strengths and short-comings. These projects do not appear to have links or impacts beyond the immediate community and direct beneficiaries.

The education component of the Batey Community Development project is more complex. The education component was designed as an integral part of the broader community development effort, with identified links to other programs in the community and to the MINERD. The four objectives of the component are improved infrastructure and materials, improved quality of primary school education, improved enrolment and attendance, and access to extra-curricular activities. A variety of resources have been applied to implementation including the use of project funds for infrastructure improvement, a MINERD school feeding program, creation of *Espacios para Crecer* (EpC) and *Espacios para Empezar* (EpE) in the bateys with technical assistance from Entrena, a MINERD school directors' training program, and a contract with PUCMM for implementation of the ESP model in the batey schools.

The evaluation found evidence of significant improvement in school infrastructure, and increases in enrollment and attendance. According to the July-September 2012 quarterly report there were EpEs implemented during summer 2012 and according to anecdotal evidence, at least some of the EpCs continue to operate but both the EpE and EpC are extra-curricular activities without direct links to or interaction with the batey schools. The most problematic part of the program has been the teacher

⁷ The evaluation report for ARYC, which also includes the MLB-DDA and BCD projects, is in Annex D.

training activity and the contract with PUCMM. After a recent assessment of the results from this training, which showed no improvement in student learning, the contract was terminated. The reasons for this termination are not fully documented but the evaluation attributes it at least in part to two factors – the failure to fully implement the ESP model, specifically the omission of the accompaniment and classroom support components, and lack of flexibility in the ESP model to adapt to the unique circumstances of the batey schools. The other facet of the teacher training program was the Quantum Learning Methodology training, which also was not fully carried out—only two days of training were offered (QL for teachers is designed as a five-day program) to most teachers and little or no follow-on coaching was provided.

3. Findings and Conclusions for the Cross-cutting Evaluation of the Education Portfolio

The evaluation of the portfolio as a whole moves up a level from project implementation to examine cross-cutting elements in the program and general results of the USAID investment in basic education in the Dominican Republic. This analysis is built around the same evaluation questions that were applied at the project level – performance, efficiency, and sustainability. The detailed subjects that guide the response to the evaluation questions about performance, efficiency, and sustainability for the portfolio are spelled out in Box 2.

Box 2: Evaluation Questions for the Portfolio Evaluation

Performance: These questions are designed to assist the Mission in its education strategy development process, in responding to priority basic education requirements in the country and to Agency-wide policies associated with USAID Forward.

- Cross-cutting program components: Do some of these components matter more than others? Is there an essential mix of components? Does the capacity to implement certain components vary among projects (or other institutions in the education system)?
- Gender equality: USAID policy requires that all activities should contribute to gender equality. To what extent does the education portfolio take account of gender considerations in design and implementation? Does the program contribute to increasing gender equality in education and more broadly in the society? Are gender differences and relations adequately addressed in program monitoring?
- Performance monitoring: USAID policy emphasizes the importance of program monitoring as well as evaluation to provide evidence of the effectiveness of investments in development, to document results, and to support institutional learning and growth of the body of knowledge about development. To what extent does monitoring in the education projects and portfolio contribute to these objectives? Does the Mission have the information it needs to track program results?

Efficiency: The questions related to efficiency are structured to help USAID identify core aspects of the projects that are essential to the overall objective.

- What are the relative costs and benefits for the portfolio of duplication of components across projects vs specialization?
- Is this an integrated program? To what extent are the results of the package greater than the sum of the individual activities?

Sustainability: Sustainability of USAID education activities is tied to changes in the entire education system. To what extent does the USAID/DR education portfolio contribute to improved quality of basic education in the country as a whole? Does the coordination between the USAID/DR portfolio and other initiatives and institutions in the basic education system provide the basis for institutionalization of the program?

3.1. Performance

3.1.1 Program Components

The project evaluations examine the relationship among the various program components within each project. The assessment across projects provides a comparison to address the relative importance of the components independent of the project context. The cross-cutting components identified for the evaluation are teacher training and coaching, school infrastructure and teaching materials, and school management in the formal education programs, and after-school education activities and summer camps, and school to work training in the non-formal education programs.

Turning first to the ESP and BEP, on paper the approaches to improving the quality of basic education are similar. They share the same objective of quality education and both include components for teacher training, provision of materials, school management activities, and monitoring and evaluation. But, the implementation structures for achieving the program objectives are significantly different.

The ESP has been designed and implemented as an integrated program by PUCMM, a leading Dominican educational institution, with support from USAID since the early 2000s. The objective of the ESP is defined as “improvement in quality learning of students” and the interventions are focused in the classroom. The four project components are part of an integrated program focused on teachers and improved pedagogy. Teacher training and extended classroom coaching and accompaniment are the core of the approach but the pedagogical strategies promulgated by the program also rely heavily on educational materials for hands-on activities and student textbooks, which are provided to the schools as part of the program. The education management, safe schools, and monitoring and evaluation components are intended to support improved student learning in the classroom.

In contrast, BEP’s four components are process-oriented and include private sector involvement, school sponsorship interventions, strategic alliances with the private and public sectors, and assessment, monitoring and evaluation. The BEP objective is to improve the quality of basic education in selected public schools through “comprehensive, sustainable and integrated interventions,” but it is more clearly identified as a mechanism to strengthen community and private sector involvement in education. The interventions are managed by AMCHAM/DR, which provides administrative and technical assistance to connect the funds provided by private sector firms that act as school sponsors to the interventions in public schools the firms chose to support. Neither AMCHAM/DR nor the sponsors are educational institutions. While the objective is to develop “comprehensive, systematic and integrated interventions” the means for implementing these interventions by AMCHAM/DR is a decentralized business model – essentially bidding out the contracts for service provision. In part as a result of this model, to this point, BEP has not provided systematic and integrated interventions in the schools.

The alliance between AMCHAM/DR and the private sponsors is grounded in the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, and presents support to quality basic education as one of several available options for investment. Interviews with the sponsors confirmed that firms have selected this option because they can rely on AMCHAM/DR to provide quality education investments. While the sponsors recognize the need for improved education in the country, they do not have the technical knowledge to act independently.

The ESP and BEP also differ in their relationship with other parts of the broader basic education system. For the ESP, PUCMM has a close working relationship with MINERD, which has collaborated in selection of the program’s target schools and is supporting the extension of the program into additional districts. The BEP engages with the MINERD not in a technical capacity (with basic education or curriculum

development), but instead through the unit responsible for community participation. AMCHAM/DR as an organization generally does not seek to interact with the Ministry directly but is seeking to facilitate engagement between the private sector sponsors and the Ministry through the advocacy activities of EDUCA.

These contrasting mechanisms generate distinct results in terms of performance across the program components. Two key findings emerge from this comparison:

- The mechanism affects performance by component, with sharp contrasts between the two programs; and,
- There are essential inter-relationships among the components that affect educational results.

The ESP teacher training component is recognized and positively perceived by teachers, directors, and parents, who feel that the pedagogical strategies are effective in motivating students and in increasing learning. The statistical assessment of the results in student achievement generally confirms these perceptions. Classroom support and accompaniment by program staff emerge as key factors in adoption of the new strategies. (District technical personnel and school administrators have been less effective in this role.) Although teachers actually use the ESP strategies and the hands-on teaching materials in the classroom to varying degrees, the evaluation team did not observe traditional dictation methods in the classroom visits. Teachers emphasize the importance of planning and time management in their work. Teachers and students like the mathematics textbooks and rely on them heavily in applying the ESP pedagogical strategies in mathematics.

The ESP education management component is smaller than the teacher training component but school directors who have participated in the program perceive it as valuable, and again, accompaniment for directors in their schools by ESP program technical staff is identified as important to adoption and continued use of methods.

BEP performance is more difficult to characterize and assess, particularly in terms of the effect in the schools. While directors and teachers laud the concept of sponsorship and appreciate any support they receive, to date, BEP has not delivered a plan for “comprehensive, coordinated, and systematic intervention” at the school level. The reasons for this include lack of human resource capacity (i.e., small staff), out-sources technical model, and weak monitoring. The program has been successful as a mechanism to channel private sector investment in public education, and there is a clear consensus on program goals and components between AMCHAM/DR and the private sector sponsors. A similar consensus has not been achieved with the individual schools or with other actors in the education system. While the sponsors perceive their relationship with the program in positive terms, AMCHAM/DR’s role at the school level is undifferentiated and not attributable. School directors perceive sponsorship as valuable but do not associate it with comprehensive educational interventions.

BEP utilizes commercially available standard training programs for improving teacher performance. The training includes many of the same principles as ESP, but without strong integrated program management, and as a result minimal effect is observed on learning in the classroom. The AMCHAM/DR administrative team includes an education coordinator to provide technical coordination but, with more than 70 schools enrolled in the program, the depth of support for each school can only be very limited. For example, BEP does not have the internal capacity for classroom accompaniment. The program’s point of contact in the school is the director, and classroom support is seen as the task of the director.

The interventions often are perceived as *ad hoc*.⁸ The human resources that BEP will be able to dedicate to programmatic management in the future are unclear.

The two programs also have very distinct levels of monitoring and evaluation capacity. The ESP has made a substantial investment in monitoring change in student achievement, with baseline and control group comparisons over time. Statistical analysis is possible. Monitoring is a tool for the program to track the effectiveness of its methodology for student learning, to make adjustments to improve results, and to contribute to the body of knowledge about early grade learning. In contrast, BEP's written records are insufficient for effective implementation of the M&E plan. For example, evaluators were unable to ascertain the number and timing of interventions by school. No baseline information or output indicators are available to measure the change over time for teachers or students.⁹

The conclusion from the comparison of component performance across the two programs is that an integrated package of interventions, grounded in understanding of student learning and the needs of educators, is necessary to produce change in educational and learning outcomes.

Table 10: Findings and Conclusions (Program Components)

Conclusion	Summary Findings
An integrated package of interventions, grounded in understanding of student learning and the needs of educators is necessary to produce change in educational and learning outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mechanism affects performance by program component, producing sharp contrasts between the education results of the ESP and BEP. • There are essential inter-relationships among the components that affect educational results.

3.1.2 Performance and Lessons Learned in Non-formal Education Programs

Although the information available to the evaluation on the non-formal education projects in the ARYC program and the education components of the MLB-DDI and BCD projects is limited and based primarily on document review, overall the same conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of performance in these activities.

3.1.3 Gender Equality

All of the project evaluations addressed gender considerations in their design and analysis. None of the projects has a gender strategy or explicit monitoring of gender relations or effects on equality. All indicators on number of people trained are disaggregated by sex. The general assumption by implementers is that gender is not an important factor affecting inequality in Dominican education.

Women predominate throughout the basic education system and in the non-formal education programs – as students, active parents, teachers, and directors. The analysis of the ESP database on student achievement (Annex B) confirmed that as students, girls achieve on a par or better than boys. Further, despite direct questions and probing, gender-related issues were not identified as concerns in the schools. Various key informants suggested that the dominance of women in the education system reflects cultural stereotypes and socialization that emphasize obedience, study and responsibility for girls, and more *macho* behaviors for boys like independence and defiance. While this difference in

⁸ BEP is instituting a new programmatic approach effective with this school-year that may address some of these challenges.

⁹ Efforts are underway to address this shortcoming, including the use of the Early Grade Reading Assessment tool (EGRA) to set a baseline for student achievement.

socialization may be important in explaining girls dominance in the education system, academic success does not necessarily translate into comparable success in employment and income. It also is important to examine the extent to which textbooks, curriculum, and teacher behavior reinforce this socialization and the stereotypes limiting the education and life choices for both boys and girls. Finally, it is noteworthy that while women predominate at the middle levels in management in the education system, access to upper management remains less accessible to women than to men.

Gender relations were identified in key informant interviews and school visits as a factor in school violence and discipline problems, particularly in the spillover between family-based violence directed at women and children and gender-based violence in the schools. The only USAID-supported activity that addresses this issue is the pilot Safe Schools component of the ESP. The external evaluation of this pilot experience, which is in process, should provide additional insights to USAID/DR for gender integration in future education programs. The Mission also may benefit from contact with the recently appointed gender specialist in the Ministry of Education in preparation of the gender analysis required as part of the strategy development process.

Table 11: Findings and Conclusions (Gender Equity)

Conclusion	Summary Finding
The evaluation identified gender issues related to education quality particularly in terms of school violence and the imbalance in participation affecting boys and men.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender analysis and attention to gender considerations have not been integrated into the Mission education portfolio to date, because of the assumption that gender relations are not important given the numerical predominance of girls and women in all aspects of the basic education system.

3.1.4 Performance Monitoring

Monitoring the indicators in the project performance management plan (PMP) through the course of the activity is the basis for tracking activity progress. It is a management tool. If the achievements do not match the targets, corrections are made. Monitoring data also is essential input to project evaluation. With baseline measures, outcome indicators in the PMP measure the degree of change in project results, and the contribution of a particular activity to program results.

Across the board, the PMPs and work plans of the projects rely principally on output indicators to measure progress – e.g., the number of teachers trained, materials distributed, and visits completed. The projects do not report to common outcome indicators for higher level results, and, with the exception of the ESP, baseline data are not available to assess change.

The BEP reporting and monitoring system is not sufficiently school- and teacher-focused. There is no baseline. Any indicators reported are aggregated by vendor rather than by school. In the new tripartite agreements (AMCHAM/DR, sponsor, school), schools will be required to send achievement data, but no additional guidance has been provided on definitions or content. AMCHAM/DR has used a similar approach with vendors. By outsourcing the definition of the requirements for monitoring data, BEP collects data that are not comparable and do not match its own records.

Table 12: Findings and Conclusions (Performance Monitoring)

Conclusion	Summary Finding
Deficiencies in the performance monitoring plans limit the capacity of the evaluation team and the Mission to document results that are the outcomes of their investments, and to make quantitative comparisons among projects relative to the education assistance objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lack of baseline measures in most of the education portfolio and a reliance almost entirely on output indicators for reporting.

3.2. Efficiency

The question of efficiency at the level of the portfolio examines (1) the relative benefits of repeating various program components, independently across projects, and (2) the extent to which the portfolio is an integrated program, where the results are greater than the sum of the individual activities.

This evaluation of the ESP generally confirms the positive perception and documented results of the performance and efficiency of the PUCMM model for improved student learning in grades one through four. The evaluation also identifies the integration of key components – especially teacher training, classroom accompaniment, a supportive school environment, and textbooks – as necessary to achieving sustainable change in teacher’s behavior in the classroom and in student learning. This change is a process that needs to be managed over time.

Likewise the EpC and EpE models implemented originally by EDUCA and ENTRENA and adopted in several of the non-formal education activities have demonstrated positive results in providing education options for at-risk youth for remaining in or returning to school. However, in both cases the attempts to date to transfer these models to other USAID projects or to other institutions in the education system have not resulted in the same performance benefits as the original projects. Several examples are drawn from the project evaluations. The EpC model as applied under BEP shows some promise but linkages and school directors’ understanding of the core elements are weak.

The evaluation of BEP performance and efficiency shows that it has not been an effective mechanism for providing high performing or efficient education programs because it does not have the technical or school-level management capacity to provide the required integrated program over time. BEP is, however, a successful mechanism for generating private sector support for improved quality in education and for channeling private sector funds available for school sponsorship into education programs per se rather than merely infrastructure or one time donations. Except in several isolated situations, the BEP has not successfully contracted the implementation of the ESP methodology for schools included in the sponsorship program.¹⁰ The evaluation identified similar difficulties in the BEP adoption of the EpC model for after-school programming for at-risk and over-age youth. As independent interventions contracted on a short-term basis, the expected benefits of the activities are incomplete and not sustainable after the contract with the provider ends.

The attempted adoption of the ESP and EpC/EpE models for the education component of the Batey Community Development project also encountered difficulties and the achievements in the application of these models in the batey schools and communities were not significant. In this case the difficulties have

¹⁰ The lack of coordination between the BEP sponsorship program and the MINERD further complicates this coordination since many of the BEP schools are receiving educational programming through MINERD contracts with POVEDA.

been attributed both to incomplete application of the models and to lack of flexibility in the models in adapting to the unique circumstances of the batey populations.

Finally, in the MINERD adoption of the ESP model in additional school districts an attempt has been made to transfer the functions of classroom coaching and accompaniment to district technical staff and to the school administrative staff (directors, sub-directors, and coordinators). This maintenance of this function within the program is costly and requires continuous recruitment and training. The ESP evaluation provides evidence that to date the transfer of the accompaniment function from the ESP to the MINERD has not been effective.

Table 13: Findings and Conclusions (Efficiency)

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>There are potential efficiency gains in applying the integrated models for the formal and non-formal education projects to USAID projects on other schools/settings. Analysis of the difficulties and negotiation processes encountered in the attempts to transfer these experiences in the past is needed to realize this efficiency, particularly in light of the requirements of the new USAID Education strategy.</p> <p>The absence of successful transfer of these models to other projects limits the overall program impact of the portfolio. Without these links, the parts of the program – e.g. ESP and BEP – stand alone and the effects are bounded by the schools in which they operate. Any program level integrated results are fortuitous rather than planned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESP and the EpCs/EpEs have demonstrated the value of the application of an integrated package of components in formal and non-formal education settings respectively, when an adequate management structure is in place. • Significant difficulties have emerged in attempts to utilize these models by BEP and by the BCD project. • Operational links do not exist between the non-formal education activities and the formal education projects.

3.3. Sustainability

To what extent does the USAID/DR education portfolio contribute to improved quality of education in the country as a whole? Does the coordination between the USAID/DR portfolio and other initiatives and institutions in the basic education system provide the basis for institutionalization of the program without USAID funding?

Each of the component parts of the education portfolio has demonstrated some potential for sustainability but as discussed above and in the project evaluations, coordination among the ESP, BEP, and the at-risk youth activities is minimal. The BEP, in particular, appears to operate in relative isolation from the institutions of the education system. It is based in the private sector system and has not established linkages (other than business contracts) with education service providers or with the MINERD. The at-risk youth activities have been localized and any linkages between these activities and the formal education institutions also have been local rather than systemic. The position of PUCMM as an educational institution means that the university and the ESP have strong ties to the Ministry and other institutions, and the capacity for this program to expand and to garner support from both private and public education institutions reflects this network.

The absence of linkages among USAID-supported activities affects the extent of the effect of the USAID portfolio on improved quality of education in the country as a whole. While USAID activities provide valuable models networking and coordination increase the likelihood that these models will be broadly adopted and sustained.

Table 14: Findings and Conclusions (Sustainability)

Conclusions	Summary Findings
<p>At this point, the contribution of the USAID/DR portfolio is limited by the lack of coordination among activities within the portfolio and by the weakness in communication of the USAID strategy as a coherent whole.</p> <p>The potential exists for sharing of lessons and bringing together education specialists across the USAID portfolio.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESP model has been adopted by MINERD and by the Fundación INICIA for expansion into additional schools and districts. • BEP has demonstrated significant potential to expand and pull in additional private sector support and involvement in public education throughout the country. • Some of the non-formal education programs funded by USAID under ARYC have continued to operate effectively at the local level after termination of USAID funding. • Operationally, there is no evidence of systematic links among the programs in the USAID portfolio. • The integration of the USAID-supported projects into the institutional structure of the broader basic education system and particularly with the MINERD is based in the network of each implementing partner.

4. Recommendations for the Cross-Cutting Evaluation

The recommendations at the level of the portfolio evaluation build on the project recommendations and the conclusions from the cross-cutting questions. They reflect the requirements of the new USAID Forward requirements and the USAID Education Strategy. They are intended primarily to inform the strategy development process.

Recommendation #1: *To achieve an integrated and focused approach to early grade learning for USAID interventions, the Mission should facilitate direct interaction between the programs it supports (ESP and BEP), with the objective of establishing a mechanism for the adoption of the ESP model in the BEP-supported schools, if BEP’s focus continues to be direct support in reading and mathematics.*

Recommendation #2: *To build sustainability and strengthen the country’s education system, the Mission should develop a coordinated approach to its interventions by engaging with MINERD and the broader set of institutions involved in the basic education system nationally. This engagement also should take advantage of the AMCHAM/DR mechanism for garnering private sector support for quality public school education.*

Recommendation #3: *To better measure the contribution of activities to the expected results of USAID interventions, the Mission should develop a comprehensive Performance Management Plan for the Education development objective that includes a monitoring framework and technical assistance to assure that results are defined in terms of outcomes and impacts.*

Recommendation #4: To reduce the impact of gender-based violence in schools and redress the imbalance between boys and girls in participation and achievement in the education system, the Mission should work with implementing partners to prepare a gender analysis of the education sector so that the results are reflected in project design and monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendation #5: Going forward, if small grants to local organizations are used they should meet the requirements of the USAID Education Strategy to have “demonstrably high impact on policy reform, system strengthening, program integration or pilot innovation.”