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**THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR:
A Report of Focus Group Results**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During August 1989, USAID/EL Salvador subcontracted with Juarez and Associates, through the Academy for Educational Development, to conduct a series of focus groups with teachers, parents, and school administrators to determine the quality of educational services in El Salvador. The objective of the project was to gain first hand perceptions from providers and users of the basic education services (Grades 1 through 6). The effort was part of a larger project consisting of seven studies of the educational system. This report presents the findings of the focus group study.

Major Findings

Role of Education: School staff participants view education as the means to create in Salvadorans an ability for critical thinking. Parents, on the other hand, perceive education as a means for their children to acquire basic skills such as reading, writing, and knowledge of arithmetic.

Content of Instruction: Participants were aware that the content of the program for these grade levels (1-6) consisted of instruction in the national language, the social and natural sciences, and lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Participants also felt that the curricular program was a foreign product and failed to consider the needs of the children of El Salvador.

Preparation of Teachers: Teacher preparation was felt to be weak, especially for the newer teachers. The lack of adequate teacher preparation through pre-service training was due, in part, to the dismantling of the Escuela Normal system. The absence of such a system contributed to the loss of the sense of professionalism as well as the mistica among new teachers. It was also felt that the MOE is failing in its responsibilities by not providing frequent in-service training which was badly needed to keep current on new pedagogical techniques as well as new views on child development.

Role of Parents: Parents are viewed as an important part of the educational process. Activities for their involvement, however, are limited to those outside the classroom, including payment of fees, maintenance of schools, or reviewing of homework.

Quality of Education: Education in El Salvador was characterized as deficient. Although some tended to view it as disastrous, most pointed out that there was a base from which to work. That base included some good teachers, the availability of schools, and the existence of a curriculum. A number of factors influenced the view

of the system as deficient. Two important teacher-related factors were poor teacher preparation and an inability to use the curricular program. Systemic factors included the lack of materials, including texts, desks, and inadequate school facilities. Also, poor planning and organization, especially with regard to the assignment of teaching posts, led to deficient schooling. Programs such as the Promocion Orientada led to the reduction of students' motivation to learn. Finally, parent-related factors were listed among contributors to the weakening of the system. Lack of financial resources forced parents to keep children out of school or resulted in children skipping years of schooling. Other parents simply did not value education.

Characteristics of Good Teachers: Good teachers were characterized as being involved in the classroom, motivating their children to learn and achieve, setting and accomplishing goals, working as planners, and being concientizados of the needs of their students.

Grade Repetition: Retention of students in a grade was primarily due to the student's failure to master the skills for that level.

School as a Childcare Facility: Overall, the value of school was seen as a vehicle for advancement and not as a childcare facility.

Media Educational Programming: Participants were very skeptical about the utility and functioning of educational programming through broadcast media. Most indicated that, at least for TV, it already had been attempted, and had failed. Its failure was due to the lack of proper training for those who implemented the program, the lack of attention given to the equipment, and to the idea that TV is an entertainment medium not likely to be seen as a vehicle for education. Finally, it was mentioned that education is an interactive process, and media programming should incorporate such an aspect in its format.

Factors that Inhibit Enrollment: The principal reason for children not enrolling in school was that the parents could not afford to send them, according to participants. The high costs of schooling (estimated at C. 200-700 per year per child) or the need for children to contribute financially to the family prevented them from continuing in school. Some participants, however, also alluded to the irresponsibility of parents who saw no value in educating their children.

Salaries: An average staff salary of C. 1200.00 was considered low by the participants in this study. Low salaries force teachers to seek supplementary employment which, in turn, affects their performance in the classroom.

Focus Group Experience: All were pleased with having participated in the focus groups and equated it with taking an active role in

the educational process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study consisted of 12 focus groups undertaken with selected target groups to determine perceptions of the basic education program in El Salvador. These findings provide impressions of the participants and are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole. Also, the findings cannot be subjected to any type of statistical analysis; they serve to define the parameters established by service providers and users to judge the merits of the educational system.

It appeared that the role of education differed for parents and school staff. Parents focused on a much more practical education than did teachers and administrators.

Participants noted that a good foundation exists for the system -- good teachers are available, a good curricular program has been developed, and some school buildings are functional. However, they characterized the educational system in El Salvador as deficient; all areas could be improved. The main concerns rest in the areas of teacher preparation; lack of school materials, especially textbooks; and low salaries for educational staff. Other changes in the system that are seen as necessary include training teachers in teaching strategies, assigning teachers to schools and locales, creating a sense of ownership of the curricular program, and constructing and upgrading school buildings to make them all functional.

The major recommendations that flow from these findings include the following:

1. That USAID consider establishing a social marketing program in education for the purpose of: a) bringing parental expectations of achievement for the first six grades more in line with the capabilities of the system; and b) through mass media campaigns, make parents aware of the benefits of educating their children.
2. That USAID urge the MOE to create ownership of the curricular program among school staff through training in its use. Teachers and administrators can be made to see that the intent of the program's flexibility is to allow them to create lessons that address the needs of their specific schools.
3. That USAID consider financing a classroom observation study to determine obstacles to implementation of the curricular program with the purpose of identifying the classroom factors that facilitate and impede its

implementation.

4. That USAID, in conjunction with the MOE, consider a demonstration project for training teachers. The pilot project should consist of a one-month paid training course to be conducted before the start of the school year and designed to impart knowledge of new teaching strategies, create a sense of professionalism and mística among teachers, and provide the needed motivation to initiate the school year.
5. That USAID encourage the MOE to establish activities to recognize the value of parental participation in the schools.
6. That a management study of the MOE's planning and organizing systems be conducted to identify ways to select and assign school staff in a formal and systematic manner.
7. That USAID encourage the MOE to review the Promocion Orientada regulation and the manner in which it is being applied by teachers, and to examine whether it is meeting its objective.
8. That USAID carefully assess its desire to invest in radio education programming. Should the decision to invest be taken, the content and format of the programming must be in line with the needs of the target audience.
9. That USAID encourage the MOE to conduct a study of the salary structures for school staff with the intent of increasing salaries, especially for teachers.
10. That USAID consider training staff members in the use of focus group techniques to use as a tool in the formative evaluations of its projects.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

El Salvador is a country in crisis. It has suffered numerous natural calamities in recent years including earthquakes and flooding. Equally disastrous in terms of destruction has been the violence that has gripped the country for the last 10 years. The resulting loss of over 70,000 lives, the weakening of the economic base, and the resulting ambience of anomie contribute to a sense of desperation among the populace at large. With the recent dialogue between the FMLN and the Government of El Salvador (GOES) has come hope that things will improve ("Primero Dios," as the Salvadorans are fond of saying).

The educational services provided in El Salvador must be delivered within this context. By law, all children are entitled to a free basic education and are obligated to attend first through sixth grades. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), an estimated 866,000 children received basic education instruction in grades 1-6 in 1988. The goal of the educational effort in the first two cycles is that the student develop capabilities and skills that will provide for awareness of self as well as provide knowledge of the role the student plays in society (MOE, Memoria de Labores, 1988-1989, p.3). However, as noted in that document, only 75% of the target population has had an opportunity to receive basic educational services. In fact, El Salvador outperforms only Guatemala among the Central American nations on measures of access to education and the efficiency of the educational system. In 1986, only 71% of the students of the correct age (7 through 12) were attending school. Fifty-nine percent graduated from the sixth grade, and it took almost 11 years to produce a sixth-grade graduate (Academy for Educational Development, 1988).

B. Objectives of the Study

What factors have contributed to this situation? Among them have been those related to the lack of access to educational services, poor maintenance of the schools, lack of teachers, and others. A majority of USAID's efforts over the past decade in the education sector have been directed towards alleviating infrastructural shortcomings resulting from the political and natural disasters that have plagued El Salvador. As of FY '90, however, the local Mission intends to redirect its activities to focus on addressing quality and efficiency concerns in basic education, especially in the first two cycles (Grades 1-6).

To accomplish this transition, it was necessary for the USAID/El Salvador Mission and the Ministry of Education to gain some knowledge from the users and providers of educational services

regarding their views of the quality and efficacy of the system and personnel who deliver those services. To this end, the Mission subcontracted with Juarez and Associates through the Academy for Educational Development to carry out focus groups among target providers and users of the services to identify their needs with regard to educational services at the basic education levels (grades 1-6). The focus group study is one of seven to be carried out under this task order. Others address an economic analysis of the education sector, a legal view of the system, and still others focus on teacher training, achievement testing, management information systems and radio education. Specifically, the focus groups were undertaken to identify attitudes and perceptions of the target audience in the following areas:

- o The role of education
- o The content of instruction in the existing system
- o The preparation of teachers for their functions
- o The role of parents in the education of their children
- o The quality of educational services
- o The characteristics of a good teacher
- o Reasons for repetition of grades
- o The importance of school as a childcare facility
- o The viability of providing educational programming through the broadcast media.

C. Organization of the Report

This report thus presents the findings of the focus group study. The first section contains background information on the country and its educational system to provide a context for understanding the findings of the research. The next section includes a description of the methodology used to undertake the research and includes limitations of the study. Section III presents findings with respect to the factors mentioned above. Section IV provides conclusions and opportunities for action. Finally, Section V provides development implications of the study's findings.

In the appendices to this report, the reader will find copies of the instruments used to recruit participants for the groups, copies of the guides used to conduct the sessions, and 13 topline reports. The reader is strongly encouraged to peruse the topline reports in Appendix A to obtain a sense of the concerns of each of the groups.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Focus Groups as a Qualitative Research Strategy

Thirteen focus groups were conducted in different parts of the country with four distinct target segments of the population to obtain information on the topics of concern to the local Mission. This section describes the focus group methodology, presents limitations of the method, and provides information on the recruitment and selection of participants and the instruments used to conduct the groups. Readers interested in the screeners and guides may review these in Appendices B and C.

1. Focus Group Strategy

A focus group is basically a group discussion conducted to obtain participants' perceptions of a common experience. It is typically composed of seven to 10 participants who are unfamiliar with each other and who share common characteristics that relate to the topic of importance to a client. Through the use of a moderator's guide, the moderator focuses the group on the different topics to be examined. The moderator attempts to create a relaxed atmosphere in the group to allow for discussion of candid opinions regarding the product or service being investigated. The moderator solicits perceptions from the individuals and probes for those contrary to the majority opinion as well as for the underlying structures that give rise to such perceptions. Usually, more than one group is conducted per target segment to identify trends or patterns in perceptions. Careful and systematic analysis of the discussions provides clues and insights as to how a product or service is perceived.

There are several benefits to the use of this methodology. The discussion offers more stimulation to the participants than an interview. Synergy created through the group discussion provides for indepth insights into a topic. The method also allows for collecting information quickly and at lower costs than through the use of quantitative methods. Data collected within a week is available to a client in a matter of days. This is particularly advantageous in the private sector where the availability of information may mean the gain or loss of an advantageous competitive situation. In this instance, the local USAID Mission opted for the use of the technique to gain firsthand knowledge about the needs and perceptions related to basic education services from the users and providers of such services.

There are a number of limitations to the method. The sample is in no way representative of the population. While a number of criteria are established to ensure a meaningful sample, there is no random selection of participants for the groups. Also, the small number of groups conducted to examine a concern provide

information that is impressionistic. The information cannot be subjected to any type of statistical analysis. Another factor affecting representativeness is that the participants themselves, by agreeing to join a group discussion, may be distinct from other users of the service. Also, the focus group interview has less control over the nature of the data obtained than that provided through an individual interview. Finally, without a skilled moderator, the discussion can prove fruitless.

B. Sample

The sample and the recruitment criteria were the first two issues addressed at the inception of the project. The Mission, in conjunction with the subcontracted firm, agreed on conducting a total of 12 groups. The distribution was six parents' groups, four teachers' groups, and two administrators' groups.

During the recruitment process, an opportunity to interview school dropouts under the age of 16 arose. One group was recruited and conducted as a pilot. It was not incorporated in the analysis nor are findings presented for that group. However, readers interested in this group's results are referred to the topline report entitled "Dropouts" included in Appendix A.

The original intention was to recruit a balanced number of participants from the urban and rural areas, as well as a balanced number of male and female participants. Once in the field, security reasons impeded traveling to some pre-selected communities, and the shifting demographics of the country's population affected male participation in the parents' groups. During the recruitment process, it was found that many homes were headed by single mothers. The fathers, when present in the home, were skeptical about participating or were unable to attend because of work commitments.

In drawing the sample, the three major geographical regions in El Salvador were considered. As such, participants were drawn from the Western, Central, and Eastern regions.

1. Recruitment

The recruitment effort began soon after the sample was defined and the possible sites determined. Two research assistants were hired and trained to conduct the recruitment activities. Criteria for selection included: a) persons who had knowledge of the schools' sites throughout the country; and b) persons who had experience conducting field interviews. Before going out to the field, the two research assistants were provided with training to assure clear understanding of the project objectives as well as training of how to contact and interview potential participants. They were asked to approach people in a friendly, respectful manner

and to apply only the questions necessary to determine the subjects' eligibility. Ongoing communication was always maintained among team members. The constant communication helped to redirect the recruitment effort if suddenly a site became "off limits". The research assistants were instrumental in gathering at least the minimum number of participants per group and in scheduling sites where the groups were conducted. They both are current APRE employees.

2. Instruments

Two research instruments were used in the project, a Screener Questionnaire and a Moderator's Guide (see Appendices B and C). The screener served to identify participants who had at least one child attending a public school in any grade between first and sixth. Additionally, it provided a means for collecting background information on the potential participants' level of schooling and the number of household members. The teachers' and administrators' screeners included questions about the schools where they worked and, in the case of teachers, the number of pupils they had in class and the grade(s) they taught.

The Moderator's Guide was developed for each target group; that is, a separate guide was designed for parents, for teachers, and for administrators, although because of the objectives of the project, some core themes were covered with every grouping. During the course of the project, the guides underwent minor adjustment as a result of new inquiries suggested by discussions with participants. The guides were developed through discussions with Mission officials and MOE staff. Prior to production, the final drafts were reviewed, commented on, and approved by Dr. Patsy Lane, Education Officer/USAID, El Salvador, as well as the designated MOE representative, Lic. Oscar Sandoval. All recommendations suggested by both parties were incorporated in the final guides.

3. Participant Descriptions

Mothers, Central Region (San Salvador's Marginal Areas): Ten mothers whose children attend school in grades 1 to 6 comprised this group. All came from some of San Salvador's marginal areas (Zonas Marginales) around Comunidad Zacamil. Zonas Marginales Raul Rivas, Trece de enero, and Emanuel Tercera Etapa were represented. Participants estimated their communities' population at 300 to 500 families.

Participants had three, four, or five children in their families. Some of these women were heads of household. All had at least one child attending a public school. Besides their household chores, some said they worked. Selling produce and helping on a community housing project were mentioned as working activities.

Mothers, North-Central Region (Cojutepeque): Eleven mothers attended this session. All were residents of Cojutepeque, a commercial center known in El Salvador for its quality homemade sausages (embutidos). All participants had at least one child attending one of several local schools in a grade from 1 to 6. The most mentioned school was "Escuela Anita Alvarado," the research site.

Some in the group were single mothers while others were married. One was a widow. Those who were heads of household worked for a living, while most of the married ones were housewives and took care of domestic chores at home. Of those who worked, some worked at the local market, just blocks away from the school site where the session took place. One was a nurse. She was very knowledgeable of the surrounding rural areas and of the people living there.

As perceived by their personal conduct and attire, most in the group belonged to a socioeconomic segment which allowed them and their families access to most of the community's goods and services, including schooling.

Mothers, Eastern Region (San Miguel): Nine women participated in the group. All were from San Miguel, La Ciudad de los Garrobos. All were married or were single mothers with five, six, or seven children each. One woman cared for a grandchild in addition to her own children. The woman with seven children reported that one of her sons lives in New Orleans.

Some of the participants worked outside their houses as maids and in other occupations. One was a small businesswoman and one a secretary.

Fathers, Eastern Region: Eight men were screened and recruited to participate in this focus group. All met the qualifying criteria that participants must have at least one child attending school in any of the grades corresponding to the first two cycles of basic education. All the men were parents of more than one child. One had five children.

Besides the similarities among the men in the group there were some significant differences which were manifested in the course of the discussion. Of these differences, the most salient was the participants' level of schooling. Five participants had little or no schooling, one was a law student, one had a B.A. in Public Administration, and one mentioned "university studies" during the screening interview. With this in mind, the moderator worked to grant equal discussion time to the less literate.

Another difference detected was that whereas the majority of participants were from urban San Miguel, two were from faraway cantones in Morazan State. The latter provided the group with

views on the problem from the perspective of the rural areas.

Female Administrators, Central Region: Ten female administrators were interviewed in a small semi-urban center in the North-Central region of the country. These were eight principals of schools, one psychologist and regional administrator, and one administrator of a nucleo. All had been working within the realm of education either as teachers or administrators for over 15 years; their experience as educators ranged from 15-26 years.

All but two were married and had children; one was single, while the other was widowed. They lived in Cojutepeque or in the immediate vicinity, although they were principals of different schools. Except for the regional administrator, all indicated that they held other jobs including working as teachers or administrators in other schools. The married women reported that their husbands also worked, a circumstance that helped to ease the rough economic situation for them in El Salvador.

Female Teachers, Western Region: Eleven females participated in the group in Santa Ana. All were teachers from the first through sixth grades in the surrounding area. Four were sixth grade teachers; two each taught third, fourth, and fifth grades respectively, and one taught first grade. All had over 19 years of teaching experience within a range of 19 to 28 years of service. Nine reported having graduated from the Escuela Normal; one indicated that she also had received some university training. The teachers represented nine different schools in the surrounding area.

Male Teachers, Western Region: Nine male teachers from Santa Ana and its surrounding communities participated in this group. All were elementary school teachers of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. All reported class sizes of over 30 students with one indicating that he taught a class of over 40.

Seven had studied at the Escuela Normal, while one did not report his educational background. Two were Level II teachers. Among the group were two English teachers, another with a degree in administration, and still another in math. Seven different schools were represented in the group.

Male, Urban Teachers, Central Region: Seven male teachers comprised this group of participants. All had over eight years of teaching experience with a range of 8 to 26 years in the profession. All had taught in the rural areas before being placed in their present positions.

All but one were married men whose wives worked. Most had two to five children living with them. One had his children in private schools, while the rest had theirs in public schools. All but one had other jobs in addition to their teaching positions.

Most taught at private schools in the afternoons, while one was a microempresario and another a salesperson.

Female Teachers, Central Region: Ten female teachers participated in this group. All were primary education teachers, with all but one having eight years or more of teaching experience. All had taught the different grades in primary school, as well as one year or more in rural areas. Some indicated that they would be willing to return to the rural areas if there were no war. Others stated they would not return to the rural areas, for their families were in San Salvador and they preferred to be with their families.

Most reported a preference for teaching first or second grade; one indicated that she preferred to teach fourth grade. The preference for first grade was based on the innocence of the children and their easier manageability.

All except one indicated that they had received their training in the Escuela Normal. The one reported that she lacked university credentials, although she had accreditation (maestra empirica).

All were married and had one or two children, with usually one in the primary schools.

Male Administrators, Central Region: Nine principals and assistant principals as well as one Director de Nucleo participated in this group. All were middle-aged men in their late 30s, 40s, or early 50s, married with children. Most had been involved in education for a number of years, with one for over 30 years.

All indicated that they worked at least two jobs, and most reported working three jobs including teaching or administering private schools, working double shifts in public schools, or working in adult schools. All were principals of schools in the northern fringes of San Salvador and served students from marginal communities in the area.

C. Study Limitations

Three important limitations can be cited with regard to this study -- concerns for safety, the need for a timely reporting of the findings, and the difficulty in recruiting fathers.

1. **Concerns for Security**

A primary methodological constraint was the elimination of areas of conflict from the sampling frame for reasons of security and personal safety. This left out large parts of the northern and eastern sections of the country. Additionally, participants were reluctant to participate in night sessions. For the security

of participants as well as that of the field team, locals recommended that the field work be conducted during daylight hours. This made the recruitment process more difficult, especially with regard to including fathers as participants. The consistency of findings across all segments, however, may yield insights into their applicability as a whole.

2. Element of Time

Given the structure of the project and the need for this study's results before the next component of the project was initiated, the groups were limited and programmed for specific timeframes to allow delivery of a draft report by the date specified in the PIO/T. This influenced the decision on the number of groups as well as the scheduling of these. The timing factor, in turn, affected the ability to recruit fathers, as they were reluctant to leave work to attend a session. As such, only one fathers group was able to be held. The two scheduled groups were replaced with additional groups of mothers.

3. Changes in the Nuclear Family

Initially, three groups with fathers were scheduled to take place. It was only after recruitment began that the difficulty of recruiting this target group became evident. The inability to include more fathers was due to a number of reasons. First, as mentioned previously, fathers who worked could not attend sessions during the day. Also, all participants were reluctant to attend sessions at night. Second, it was discovered that some fathers, upon gaining knowledge of the topics to be addressed through the groups, recommended that their wives be the participants given that they are the ones responsible for tending to a child's education. This indicated that fathers may not have been an appropriate target group for the study. Finally, as the recruitment process unfolded, it became evident that family disintegration was widespread in El Salvador. This social phenomenon was changing the nature of the family structure, leaving an inordinately high number of households as single-parent families headed by females. Thus, fathers were simply difficult to find in many of the households.

III. FINDINGS

The first section of this part of the report presents overall findings of the study for administrators and teachers. Findings for parents are presented in the second section.

A. Administrator and Teacher Findings

Two focus groups were conducted with administrators and four with teachers. In both target segments, the groups were divided by gender with males comprising one set of groups and females another. This was done to isolate differences in perceptions by sex. However, no differences were found between the groups in terms of the issues addressed or how the perceptions were framed. Also, no differences were found with respect to the views expressed by administrators and teachers on the topics discussed in the sessions. Thus, findings for both sets of participants are presented here. Where any differences are significant, they are identified and discussed in the appropriate subsections. The group with male administrators was conducted in Santa Tecla, while the one with females was carried out in Cojutepeque. Among the teachers, four groups, two male and two female, were conducted. One male teachers' group was carried out in Santa Tecla, the other in Santa Ana; one female teachers' group was held in San Salvador, the other in Santa Ana. A brief description of all participants in these groups can be found in the methodology section of this report.

1. Role of Education

Teachers and administrators saw the field of education as a process through which a child's integrated development occurs. Additionally, participants observed that education serves to instill in children an ability for critical thinking -- an ability to reason. That is, through their distinct tasks, teachers and administrators assure that children are able to develop the socio-emotional, psychological, intellectual, personal, and physical skills needed to be able to stand on their own. This is best illustrated through the comments of the teachers from the Western region when they stated that teachers have a mission, that mission comprised of educating children in an integrated manner in addition to seeking to transfer knowledge. The goal of the whole effort, they stated, was to allow children to develop positive attitudes toward the problems which they will confront in life. Another group of teachers noted that through their work, teachers contribute to the formation of the national ideology and idiosyncrasies.

2. Content of the Curricular Program

According to the teachers and administrators, the curricular program was the result of a national reform movement in education. Its content for the first six grades consists of basic lessons in math, the social and natural sciences, the national language, and writing and reading. According to one teacher, children learn the basic things needed to defend themselves ("Se aprende a leer y a escribir -- cosas básicas que le pueden servir para defenderse").

According to the school staff, the curricular program had been developed by foreigners with little participation from local teachers and administrators. One mentioned that the program was modelled after the Japanese educational program (a highly developed society, she added); others pointed out that it was foreign technical specialists brought in by the MOE who provided the program; for still others, it was San Salvadoran desk-bound specialists who had little contact with children and educators who developed the program. In fact, one teacher noted, El Salvador seemed to be a laboratory for foreigners who come in and try distinct programs without caring what the results will be. As he stated, "The country has turned into an experimental camp (El país se ha convertido en un campo de experimento)". The end result was that the program was unsuited to the needs of the Salvadoran child.

One problem with this process, they pointed out, was that little in the curricular program could be applied to the country. The main reason for its inapplicability was that the developers of the curriculum were not knowledgeable about the needs and reality of the children of El Salvador, such as for basic health and nutrition as well as for work.

Teachers also were quick to point out that the program was incomplete in that lessons were not developed in their entirety. They noted that lessons at times were not relevant to the situation in El Salvador.

Those quick to take another perspective, however, were the Directores de Nucleo. In both groups of administrators, it was the Nucleo directors who stated that the program was indeed a good program. According to them, it set out a number of content areas for teachers to work with and suggested materials for them to use. It did not develop entire lessons, they pointed out, so that teachers could adapt the material to the local context -- either rural or urban, Eastern or Western regions.

Some teachers in the groups also stated that the curricular program was a good one because it did provide enough direction for instructors. For them, the problem lay in that many teachers were not capable of using or were not trained in using the program. Even if they did know how to use it, others pointed out, they did

not have adequate resources to implement the program as they lacked texts, writing implements, chalk, paper, and other basic supplies.

3. Preparation of Teachers for Their Functions

According to both teachers and administrators, training of teachers has fallen by the wayside in recent years. All groups sensed that new teachers (certified in the last five years) were inadequately prepared for the tasks they had to carry out. This was because there was no one institution, according to them, to carry out the function of training teachers and to draw from them the mística of teaching. The Escuela Normal, which formerly held that function, was no longer operating. It was now a military barracks.

Participants noted that teachers could now be trained by various institutions. As a consequence, there was no sense of teaching as a vocation and new teachers had little regard for proper behavior in the classroom, looked to teaching as a temporary job as they prepared for other careers, and had no knowledge of how to carry out their tasks in the classroom. One director from Cojutepeque noted that in the Escuela Normal students learned how to teach as well as learned the value of teaching ("... la capacitación moral para la vocación"). A male teacher in Santa Tecla observed that because of low salaries, persons used teaching as a trampoline to other jobs. ("... un trampolin para poder estudiar para otras carreras").

In-service training, according to the teachers, was practically nonexistent. That which had been carried out was, according to them, of dubious value. For example, male teachers in the West stated that a training session had not been conducted for them in close to five years. The female teachers noted that many of them had graduated from the teacher's college some time back and needed to be updated on the latest in pedagogical techniques and in knowledge about child development theories. They suggested that the MOE organize seminars for teachers to deal with such issues. A third teacher from the San Salvador area stated that she had attended one training session, but it had been a waste of her time. It was poorly organized, she said, and they were made to wait some time before the sessions were started because of lack of preparation on the part of the trainers. The overall consensus on the part of both the teachers and the administrators was that there was a need for attention to both pre-service and in-service training.

4. Role of Parents in the Education of Children

The teachers viewed the role of parents as critical in the whole educational process. According to the school personnel, parents are currently involved in the schooling of the children in a number of ways. First, they contribute money for the purchase

of supplies for the child's school. Also, parents attend conferences with teachers when requested to do so. Finally, parents help in the repair of schools when these need maintenance.

The teachers suggested that parents also should help them by reviewing a child's work at home and providing him/her with motivation for working hard. They noted, however, that many parents themselves are illiterate and cannot help their children with the school work. Also, others are irresponsible parents who do not value education since they never attended schools. Other staff members pointed out that many parents can no longer become involved in the education of their children as they are too busy earning a living.

Parents, according to the teachers, are not as involved as they were in the past. According to the teachers, they do not render assistance as they used to ("Ésta [ayuda] ya no es prestada como antes"). One reason for this is the country's ongoing crises, including the war and the disintegration of the family. Families are disintegrating as the father is lost to the war or leaves to look for employment in other parts of the world. The mother, who had traditionally been involved in a child's education, is now called upon to shoulder the entire burden of providing and caring for the family.

5. Quality of Educational Services

Participants characterized the quality of educational services as deficient. A number of reasons were posited in support of such a characterization. Among the major ones were those relating to teachers, to the educational system, and those of a more socioeconomic nature.

Educational personnel cited three basic factors that relate to teachers to account for their view of the system as weak. One, discussed previously, is the lack of the teaching mystique among the newer professionals. According to the teachers, there no longer exists a moral sense of teaching as a vocation. Secondly, they noted, are the low salaries that teachers earn. Low salaries have a twofold effect: on the one hand, they noted, people are attracted to the profession who are interested solely in earning a salary quickly. On the other hand, teachers are forced to seek other jobs to make ends meet. Thus, many teachers may be attending the university in preparation for another career or may be holding down two or three jobs. The consequence is lack of attention to students in the classroom.

Another teacher-related factor which was claimed to contribute to the deficiency of the system is a phenomenon which the participants called comodismo. This behavioral characteristic was described as giving the least amount of effort in the classroom. The best indicators of comodismo, according to the participants,

were when teachers had students copy material from texts or from the blackboard, or when they assigned a student the task of supervising the classroom. According to the participants, such examples are quite prevalent in the classrooms. This characteristic results from teachers being lazy; being too tired from having worked several jobs; or from needing to complete university assignments (as in the case of those preparing for another career).

Systemic factors were readily identified as other variables which contribute to the poor quality of education in El Salvador. Among the most important of these were the lack of a program that meets the needs of the Salvadoran child; poor planning and organization on the part of the MOE; the existence of the Promoción Orientada; inadequate preparation of teachers; lack of enough schools or schools in poor condition; lack of supplies; overpopulation in schools; and the lack of supervision of teachers.

The participants observed that the present curricular program did not meet the needs of the Salvadoran child. As mentioned in a previous section, these staff members felt that the needs of the child were for good health, security, and a work-oriented curriculum. The program, in contrast, was developed by specialists with no familiarity with the Salvadoran reality ("la realidad Salvadoreña") and as a consequence imposed standards different from those of the community. Others noted that the education of children was too theoretical and bookbased. What was needed was a focus on practical education geared towards obtaining work.

Poor planning and organization on the part of the MOE was cited as another reason for the deficient nature of the educational system. This lack of organization was most evident, according to the school staff, in the informal assignment of teachers and administrators to posts. According to them, anyone with influence (cuello), is able to get an assignment. The certainty of acquiring a preferred position is increased, one group of teachers added, by paying officials for that assignment.

Another side to poor planning, they noted, is the problem of assigning teachers to rural area schools. They stated that they realize there is a shortage of teachers for the rural areas, but sending teachers from one community to teach in another is not satisfactory because it increases the likelihood of absenteeism. The teachers, especially, were upset by the sense that there were plenty of teachers available who had not yet received teaching assignments. They could not reconcile the shortage of teachers with the supply available.

A system of automatic promotion, part of the educational reform movement, contributes to the weaknesses in the system, according to the educators. The Promoción Orientada, designed to avoid traumatizing children in the first or second grade by having

them repeat a grade has not worked. The school personnel noted that the result of this has been that students have lost the motivation to learn since they know they will automatically pass to the next grade. Additionally, the process has created a problem for teachers in the higher grades because they receive students who lack reading and writing skills.

Another factor cited as endemic to the educational system is poor teacher preparation. The lack of a centralized teacher's college that can standardize teacher training, instill in potential teachers the ethics of the profession, and provide the base for learning how to teach has greatly weakened the system. The problem is worsened by the lack of adequate in-service teacher training on the part of the MOE, according to these staff members.

Two other factors interact to influence the deficiency of the system. According to service providers interviewed, there are not enough schools to serve all that demand attention. Migration from the rural areas has increased the school population in certain areas of the country. Additionally, the earthquake has forced population shifts within regions as people relocate to different zones within the capital. Finally, the violence in the rural areas as well as in the cities has contributed to the lack of resources for adequate maintenance of the schools. The results, noted the staff, have been classrooms with estimated sizes of 40 to 45 pupils; schools lacking in desks, texts, and other required materials; and school buildings with no electricity, water, or sanitary facilities, as was evident at Escuela Joaquin Rodezno (See Appendix D).

Another factor important to consider, according to these group participants, has been the lack of supervision of teachers by the principals as well as by the Nucleo directors. According to teachers and principals, directors do not come around often; when they do, teachers noted, they usually focus on the negative aspects of the classroom or teacher performance without investigating the underlying causes.

Finally, other factors that contribute to the declining state of the educational system, according to participants, are those related to the financial resources available to families. As the economic crisis has worsened in El Salvador, the personnel noted, families have had to take their children out of school to become financial contributors to the welfare of the family.

Another factor mentioned here was inadequate nutrition for students. Several mentioned that many students come to school not having had breakfast. This affects their ability to learn as they may fall asleep in class or become ill.

According to the teachers, these factors are much more pronounced in the rural areas of the country. Here, they noted,

teachers are unlikely to show up at the school. Also, there is a shortage of teachers in the rural areas because they fear becoming victims of the war. Most teachers have become established in urban centers. Thus, it is difficult to have them leave their families to teach in a dangerous and, usually, distant area. Finally, schools are in more dire need in the rural areas. Here, they noted, one can find schools that teach only up to the sixth grade. Thus, even if a student wanted to continue beyond the first two cycles of the basic education program, it would not be possible.

Service providers were quick to prioritize the need for change to improve the educational system. First and foremost, they suggested, was removal of the Promoción Orientada regulation. Next, most saw a critical need for textbooks and other teaching materials. Others sought a curriculum program that was more practical and more relevant to the needs of the students. Finally, they sought an increase in salary for teachers. An ideal monthly salary, according to them, was between C.2500.00 and C.3000.00. Such an amount would allow them to work only one job and free their time for planning. High among the priorities for teachers was the reinstallation of the Escuela Normal and in-service training programs.

Staff members indicated that the system could be given a grade of five on a scale of one to 10, the latter being the highest grade. The reasoning was that there was a base of schools, available teachers, and a good program from which to begin improvements.

6. Characteristics of a Good Teacher

Participants were readily able to identify characteristics they associated with good teachers. Good teachers, according to them, are punctual, responsible, push their students to achieve, and are aware of the progress of each student. Good teachers also plan their lessons and are organized in the classroom. Directors added that a good teacher defines objectives and achieves these.

Bad teachers, they observed, are more likely to exhibit comodismo. They are less likely to show up in class and usually do not show interest in their students. Also, inadequate teachers are more likely to have students copy lessons from the blackboard or from texts. Such teachers, they added, are not likely to be concerned about personal improvement. Directors added that bad teachers are not capable of maintaining discipline in the classroom.

7. Repetition of Grades

Retention of students in a grade, according to these services providers, was primarily because they had not mastered the skills required for promotion to the next grade. One director added that

another reason for retaining students was to slow their entrance into the labor force. Because of the scarcity of jobs, keeping students in school longer lessened the competition in the labor market.

The determination of whether a student passed or failed a course was based on an exam that teachers designed. Each school, according to the teachers, establishes the date for administering exams. Each teacher then develops the exam for his/her class. According to them, it is unlikely that a standard exam could be used to determine progress given the diversity of ages in a classroom and the inability of assuring that all teachers could cover the same material by the same date. Another important factor inhibiting the use of a national exam was the lack of sufficient materials, such as texts, for student use.

A related aspect to student retention is a phenomenon labeled by one teacher as estudios saltados. This was described as the tendency of students to skip years of schooling. Because of constraints on a student, he may attend school one year then skip the next and return the subsequent year. A consequence is that the student does not really master any skills. Also, this phenomenon contributes to the diversity of ages in any one classroom.

8. Importance of School as a Childcare Facility

None of the teachers or administrators saw school as a childcare facility for the poorer segments of the Salvadoran population. On the contrary, they said, children as young as 10 years of age are more likely to be removed from school to become wage earners. They can haul wood, sing in buses, or engage in unpaid labor in the home, especially in the rural areas.

9. Media Education

Teachers and administrators were quick to state that educational programming through the broadcast media was not a viable concept for El Salvador. All pointed out that educational programming through television had been attempted before and had yielded no positive results. Some stated that problems arose because of the inexperience of the staff in carrying out the programs. Others noted that equipment for the program was stolen, had broken and was never repaired, or simply was destroyed.

Other reasons for skepticism about the viability of radio educational programming, according to the teachers, were that access would be limited because many sectors of the population do not have electricity. Also, students place value on the certificate received from an institution as a measure of the validity of their own learning experience, and such a certificate would not be available from media programs. Finally, they added,

in the case of television, this was an entertainment vehicle. It would be hard to change the mentality of the target audience to accept TV as an educational medium.

10. Factors That Inhibit School Enrollment

Participants mentioned that because of the lack of financial support from the MOE, most schools charge a tuition fee. Such a fee, according to the staff, ranges from C.10.00 to C.75.00 per year. Additionally, in some schools, parents are expected to contribute a monthly fee toward the purchase of classroom supplies. Also, children must come to urban schools in uniforms. According to teachers, this places a heavy financial burden on many families. Thus, some parents keep their children at home because they cannot afford to send them to school.

. Other factors mentioned by service providers as impinging on student enrollment again included the need for children to contribute to the financial security of the family, through paid labor or by performing chores at home such as helping with the planting or harvesting of crops. Another factor influencing whether or not a child attended school was the value given to education by the parent. Staff members indicated that a parent who had received no education was unlikely to place a value on it and, thus, unlikely to send the child to school.

11. Salaries

For all participants in these six groups, salaries were of major importance in determining the quality of education provided by the system. The consensus was that teachers earn between C.1200.00 and C.1400.00 per month. This amount, they reported, was low and compared the earnings to that of a school custodian or tortillera. They indicated that, in the case of the latter two, there was no investment made in learning the skills necessary to perform the custodial or tortilla-making work. Several also sensed that when they worked in the rural areas, their pay had been less even though all teachers were meant to be earning the same salary.

Ideally, the staff members reported, they would like to earn a salary of C.2500.00 to C.3000.00 per month. A salary of this nature, they stated, would provide them with the opportunity of working only one job, which they would like. Such arrangements, however, also implied changes on the part of the system. For example, they said more teachers would have to be hired. Or, their teaching time would have to be expanded to eight hours.

Related to this issue was that of obtaining payment for their services. Teachers reported that they usually received prompt payment for services during the month they were performing these. Payment was received sometime around the 20th of every month. The process consisted of the following:

During the first 10 days of each month, a principal makes payroll lists that each teacher must sign. The principal submits the signed payroll to the departmental office of the MOE where it is revised. If there are no problems, a check for the total amount of payroll is issued in the principal's name. The latter cashes the check and deposits the amount in a special account. From this account, the administrator issues checks for each of the teachers; the checks are deposited into individual bank accounts.

Teachers reported having no problems with the present system. They indicated that there had been a time when they were paid in cash by the principals. However, as too many had been assaulted, the system was modified to one where their checks are deposited directly into their accounts. They also noted that rural teachers are much more likely not to receive prompt payment. These teachers, they observed, had to wait until the principals travelled to the departmental capital to submit payroll, travelled back to assure that nothing was wrong with the list, then made a third trip to receive payment.

12. The Focus Group Experience

All participants in these groups spontaneously expressed satisfaction with their experience in the discussion group. They generally were glad that they had participated and were glad that their opinions had been considered in matters relating to their profession.

B. Parent Findings

Six focus groups were conducted with parents of children attending public schools in grades 1 to 6. The country's three major geographical regions were represented -- the Western, Central, and Eastern regions. Of the six groups, five were with mothers and only one with fathers. Originally, the intention was to conduct an equal number of groups by gender; however, during the recruitment process it became difficult to recruit fathers because the number of households headed by men was small, and when a father was contacted and interviewed, he was either skeptical about participating for reasons of security or he had to work. Under such circumstances, the decision was made to substitute two of the originally scheduled fathers' groups with those of mothers.

What follows are the results of the groups. Whenever significant, the reader will be alerted as to whether a certain point was raised by fathers or mothers.

1. Role of Education

Views and opinions on the role of education were largely shaped by a participant's educational background. Whereas the more schooled parents pointed at some abstract aims of the educational process, parents with little or no schooling were more concerned with concrete and immediate outcomes. The former thought that one of the roles of education was to teach children how to reason; for the latter, however, teaching children how to read, write, and manipulate numbers using the four basic arithmetic functions was of paramount importance. A mother from San Salvador demanded "...concrete things so that the child can develop himself, not utopic things which are of no worth" ("...cosas concretas para que el niño pueda desenvolverse, no cosas utópicas que no sirven para nada").

Most parents agreed that schools should serve to instill in children a sense of respect, good behavior, and morals. In one of the groups, participants associated those aspects of education to the teaching of religion. In most groups, parents praised children's education as demonstrated by the children's courtesy and their respectful attitude toward others, especially adults. In two of the mothers' groups, participants said that children should respect the teacher in the same manner they respect their mothers ("...deben respetar a la profesora de la misma manera que respetan a su madre").

It was interesting to note that none of the groups assigned to education the role of offering other useful (practical) skills which the children could use after completing six grades of schooling. All of the parents' groups were probed on this issue but none of them volunteered much information. Although they mentioned "concrete things," other than embroidering, sewing, and putting buttons on garments, mentioned in one of the mothers' groups, no other practical skills were expected to be learned through the schools. The value associated with studying the basic teachings of schools was summarized by a mother who said "Knowing how to read helps you to find a job" ("Saber leer ayuda a encontrar trabajo").

2. Content of Instruction in the Existing System

Irrespective of gender, the participants were well acquainted with the content of the school program. Most knew that National Language, Mathematics, Natural Science and Social Science were the principal subjects taught in grades 1 to 6. Most parents indicated they became aware of the contents of the program chiefly by helping their children do their homework. (Incidentally, mothers more than fathers help children with the tasks assigned).

Orthography and Calligraphy were consistently mentioned as

integral subjects in the curriculum while sex education was mentioned once. The fathers' group in San Miguel encouraged the learning of one's own country first. Others in the same group suggested addressing the sociopolitical reality of El Salvador as subject matter for the classroom.

In one group, participants sensed that the teaching methodology was not Salvadoran ("La metodologia no es del pais"); they added, "...they talk about bears, but there aren't any bears in our country" ("...hablan de osos, pero no hay osos en nuestro pais").

3. Preparation of Teachers for Their Functions

The generalized judgment on teacher preparation was that teachers are ill prepared. Participants, however, made a distinction between current and former teachers as products of different training. Former teachers, they said, were better prepared. Participants used teachers' dedication to their mission and the teacher's capability to impart knowledge as the two most important variables used in casting their judgment about teachers' capability to function properly. Former teachers, they said, exercised their profession driven by a call to teach (vocation) and by mística. Whereas now, participants said, some individuals take on teaching lacking the skills and mística which, according to them, is now lost ("...la mística del maestro se ha perdido").

Participants said that one of the problems inherent in the educational process is the commercialization of education. Because of this phenomenon, one can find recently graduated teachers who just do not know. "What can they teach?" ("¿Qué pueden enseñar?")--one asked.

One of the important aspects of teacher training pointed out by participants was teachers' conscientización, the teachers' awareness of education needs and the action(s) taken based on that awareness. "Most important is teachers' conscientización" ("Lo más importante es la conscientización del maestro")--was said in two groups.

Current teacher training may not provide instruction in appropriate dress code for teachers (observer's note), because participants adversely criticized some of the new teachers' informal attire and personal appearance which, according to them, make students lose respect for teachers. In one group they said that soon after graduation, "crazy gals" show up in classrooms trying to teach. In such cases, the students show little respect.

Participants suggested training rural teachers for the service of the rural area as one of the improvements needed in teacher training. They specifically suggested bringing rural area teachers to the city for training assuring their return to the original

locales. Participants thought this strategy would help in the development of a higher degree of teachers' dedication to the education in the areas they already love.

4. Role of Parents in the Education of Their Children

An interesting assertion was made by participants regarding parents as an integral part of the education process. They said "...of what worth are good teachers without good parents?" As such, participants saw in parents a supporting element in the education of their children. Parents, according to participants, help build schools, cooperate by forming parents' associations, help children with homework, cooperate financially paying annual registration fees, and send children to school. In the past, also, some mothers used to help in a now defunct lunch program. They assisted in the distribution of the snack (refrigerio).

According to the participants, parental involvement in the education process could include the mothers' presence in schools to look after children. When the moderator probed the possibilities of parents helping inside the classroom, participants said that it was not allowed because it "Is not in the program" ("No está en el programa").

5. Quality of Educational Services

In addressing this part of the discussion, all groups were asked to rate the education system on a scale 0 to 10. Once everyone had provided his/her rating, they were individually asked to support the "grades" given with an explanation. The scores ranged between 0 and 9. Those who gave high scores associated the educational experience with the quality of their child's teacher and the educational experiences of their children. Low scores were supported with statements reflecting the need for a diametrical change, "Everything needs to be repaired" ("Todo necesita repararse")--was said in one group.

6. Characteristics of a Good Teacher

Participants had a good sense of when their children were served by a good teacher. They said that a good teacher demonstrates an interest for the class and not only possesses knowledge, but knows how to transmit such knowledge to pupils.

In some groups, the discussion about good teachers was started off by participants complaining about the behavior and poor performance of "bad" teachers inside and outside schools. "Bad" teachers dictate or write on the board instead of explaining lessons, show up for class sporadically, are "teachers who miss class a lot" (son maestros faltones), do not review assignments, are lazy (haraganes), do not keep parents informed on the progress of their children, leave class to talk to coworkers, and assign

teaching to children in the upper grades.

7. Reasons for Repetition of Grades

Parents volunteered significant views regarding El Salvador's grade repetition/promotion dynamics. They stated that currently the school system practices Promoción Orientada, a concept providing automatic advancement of children to an upper grade regardless of the child's progress in class. According to them, this concept was put into practice at the onset of the educational reform. Practicing this type of promotion is not meeting parents' educational expectations for their children, they added. In general, it was sensed that such a mode of promoting children reduces prior interest for better grades. Now, according to participants, a child's attendance is sufficient for his/her advancement to the next grade. They would prefer, however, for a child to be kept in a grade when s/he has not demonstrated the required progress as determined by the teacher.

8. Importance of School as a Childcare Facility

Although the theme of school as a childcare facility was explored, none of the groups provided information to allow analysis of the subject. The lack of input, however, may mean that parents participating in the groups did not view schools solely as institutions to provide childcare.

9. Media Education

With the exception of one mothers' group where TV and radio education was perceived as a worthwhile educational strategy for the country, the rest of the groups felt that TV and radio education did not fulfill the educational needs in El Salvador. Most of those who spoke against media education cited past failures with this mode of education. The few who thought of it as an alternative, forewarned that the country is not covered by an extensive electric network to serve the majority of households; additionally, they said that many in the rural area do not own a radio, much less a TV set.

Nevertheless, some thought that if radio and/or TV programming were to be established in El Salvador, the programming should include segments that reinforce lessons learned in the classroom. A few participants also saw media education as a means to educate adults. Others thought that TV is an entertainment device not apt for educational purposes.

10. Factors Inhibiting Enrollment

"The situation in which we live" ("La situación en que vivimos") typifies the series of reasons participants gave as impediments to some parents sending children to school. It was

said that la situación has two major interrelated components: war and economics. Among other things, the war causes teachers to abandon schools situated in conflict areas. It also, according to participants, is responsible for creating in children some mental disorders which are currently unattended. More directly, economics -- scarce financial resources -- prevent parents from sending their children to school. Even though most parents were aware of their childrens' constitutional right to free education, they claimed that the "voluntary" registration fees are not so and that it costs money to send children to school.

Some parents are able to pay the fees and buy the required school materials for their children but, according to them, others are unable to do so. The inability to pay for education is felt more strongly in the rural area; there, parents opt for taking children to work alongside them or for sending children to work by themselves instead of sending them to get an education.

School uniforms were discussed as a factor affecting school registration and attendance. Participants said that the unwritten rule was "No uniform, no school." However, as all parents participating in the groups had children in school, presumably their children owned a uniform. No assumptions are hereby made regarding the function of uniforms among non-enrollees since they were not represented in the groups. Participants mentioned that uniforms were not required in the cantón schools.

11. Salaries

On teacher salaries, most parents' comments were limited and consisted of different variations of the statement "...teachers' salaries are low." However, participants pointed to different implications of low teachers' salaries have. For instance, parents felt that teachers' low pay forces them into other activities that lead to the detriment of the quality of education they render. The low pay, also, propels teachers toward other professional goals. Several examples were presented of after-school activities engaged in by teachers to procure additional monies or other experiences - many times teachers opt for teaching an extra session; other times they pursue other careers through university studies.

12. Focus Group Experience

Every parents' group was conducted in a most candid manner including the session at the Sheraton Hotel, where at the beginning of the discussion mothers experienced some anxiety because the site was unfamiliar to them and because they were unfamiliar with the situation in which they were participating. Obtaining information from this group of mothers was more difficult than in other mothers' groups.

Once a trusting and relaxed atmosphere was created, most participants offered their opinions on the various topics suggested by the moderator or by other group participants. At times, it was hard to draw information from the more quiet individual and it was even harder to stop the talkative one when s/he got going.

Refreshments were served to participants before or during the session. At the end, each participant was paid C.40.00 (cuarenta Colones) for his or her time and effort. Each session lasted approximately 95 minutes. All items on the guide were covered at each session.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report presents conclusions and provides recommendations for various aspects related to the issues under investigation. In some cases, issues are so interrelated that it is difficult to treat them individually and, as a consequence, to provide separate recommendations for them. In those instances, a program of recommendations is provided for the reader's consideration. Exhibit 1 presents a list of factors that were found to affect education in the country.

A. Role of Education

Educational staff viewed education as a process for developing a citizenry capable of thinking for themselves. Parents had a much more mundane view of education, seeking to have their child learn the basics by the end of the sixth year, including having developed communication skills, and having mastered reading, writing, and the four arithmetic functions.

Service providers complained vehemently about the nature of the curricular program. Their biggest complaint was that the program was not relevant to the needs of the children. While they provided lip service to the development of a practical curriculum, they perceived the role of education at an abstract level removed from the needs of a community.

RECOMMENDATION: USAID, in conjunction with the MOE, may want to consider designing a social marketing program for education. A social marketing program (SMP) consists of using modern marketing strategies to promote a social good or desired change in behavior, such as smoking cessation, use of seat belts, breastfeeding of infants, or a cessation of deforestation. In this case, an SMP in education might focus on issues such as the dissemination of messages with regard to the value and function of education. In this manner, parental expectations of what is to be gained from school would be in line with what can be provided adequately by the MOE. Also, through such a social marketing program, those parents who see no value in sending their children to school could be educated in the benefits such a service affords both the children and the parents. In the long range, such a program might incorporate aspects of strategic planning that could lead to higher rates of enrollment as well as higher levels of satisfaction with the system.

B. Content of Instruction

All participants seemed to think that the curricular program needs adjustment. Service providers see it as a foreign program, something developed in isolation from the needs of the local communities. The foreign element is perceived in distinct ways, such as models borrowed from developed countries, specialists brought in from other countries, specialists from the capital, or technicians who have no teaching background. At base is the notion that teachers, who have the greatest stake in the system and upon whom parents hinge the quality of education, do not take part in the design of the curriculum.

Even those who conceded that the program is good see problems in its implementation. The overall sense is that even if they sought to implement it, lack of adequate training as well as the lack of resources are obstacles to its implementation. It seems then that there are two important factors related to the curricular program: a) there is a reaction to not having participated in its development; and b) teachers are inadequately prepared for its implementation. There is difficulty in discerning to what degree the implementation of the program is due to the lack of resources, the lack of training and the teachers' dislike of the program.

RECOMMENDATION: Service providers as well as support staff must be incorporated into the curriculum design and development process. In this manner, those who will implement the program will have a vested interest in such a project and are much more likely to use it successfully. In a sense, teachers must be made to see that the intent of allowing for flexibility of the program is so that they have a role in providing a complete curriculum through development of actual lessons based on the content areas suggested in the program. In this manner, content areas can also be tailored to the needs of the local community, thus allowing parents to play a role in the delineation of aspects of education.

The MOE may want to investigate the feasibility and viability of including vocational training in the basic education context, given the clamor for a work-oriented curriculum.

USAID also may want to consider funding a study to examine, through classroom observations, the obstacles to implementation of the curricular program. Through classroom observations, an examination could be made of the teaching strategies employed by teachers in the classroom given the multiplicity of ages and grades, the presence/absence of resources, the degree of adaptation of the program to the local context, the allocation of teacher's time for distinct tasks (administration, teaching, discipline, preparation of lessons, etc.). Such a study also would design of training

programs to train teachers in the use of the curricular program.

C. Teacher Preparation

There appears to be a view that current teachers are inadequately prepared to handle the teaching loads, the types of problems in the classroom, and the curricular program developed for the educational system. In part, this has resulted from the lack of a central institution that prepares teachers for the profession. Related to this is the loss of a sense of purpose (vocation; mística) among the teachers. Another contributing factor has been the lack of in-service training for teachers. There is little, if any, reinforcement and motivation of teachers by the MOE.

RECOMMENDATION: USAID, in conjunction with the MOE, may want to consider establishing a system to train teachers who have been assigned a position but before they begin work. USAID may wish to invest in a demonstration program, such as a pilot month-long workshop to take place in January designed to impart a professional ethic to instructors; topics to be addressed could include new developments in pedagogy, child development, teaching strategies for classrooms with multiple ages, materials development using resources around the school/home, parental involvement, and others identified by teachers as important to them. Such a paid activity would serve the function of creating a central institution for teacher preparation that could be adopted by the MOE if it proves successful yet would not be as costly as the establishment of the Escuela Normal system. Ideally, however, it would be best if that teacher preparation institution was resurrected.

D. Role of Parents

It is important to include parents in the educational process. While parents generally stated that it was the mother who looked after the education of the child, in reality both parents are involved although the specific activities are gender-based. In those cases where fathers are involved, it was noted that they generally contribute labor to ensure the upkeep of the school building. Mothers are more likely to concern themselves with the review of school work. Currently, parents participate in the maintenance of school buildings, pay tuition and other fees, and attend conferences with teachers. The major perception is that these types of activities are all that parents can perform. There was much reluctance on the part of teachers and parents to involve the latter in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATION: USAID may want to encourage the MOE to establish a means to recognize parental participation as a way of encouraging their involvement. As an example, the MOE could establish a Parent-of-the-Month program for each school where teachers present an award to the parent or set of parents who contributed significantly to school activities.

E. Quality of Educational Services

For the most part, there is a low level of satisfaction with the quality of the educational services currently provided by the MOE. For parents, the level of satisfaction with the system is intimately related to the teacher in their child's classroom. The perception among all is that there are fundamentals that can be improved. There are good teachers working with a good program and providing services in school buildings. However, a number of variables impede the improvement of the system. With regard to home factors, malnutrition and the low value placed on education contribute to the low quality of education. In terms of teachers, the lack of participation of teachers in the design of the curricular program and their lack of training in its use, as well as training in general, presents an obstacle to its implementation. The socioeconomic conditions of the country, where so many resources are used for defense rather than for education, also contributes to a deficient educational system. This manifests itself in the lack of materials for the schools, and the inadequate maintenance of buildings. Other factors that contribute to deficiencies in the process are the basis for personnel assignment and the low salaries for all staff, as well as the shortage of teachers in the rural areas. Teachers' reluctance to work in the rural areas arises as much from fear of violence as from the resulting break-up of families as teachers must leave their communities to tend to rural areas. Finally, the Promoción Orientada program has resulted in a decline in the level of motivation for achievement among the students.

RECOMMENDATION: USAID may want to encourage the MOE to provide an integrated curricular program that addresses scholastic needs as well as those related to health, recreation, and others.

Also, a closer examination must be undertaken of the planning and organization systems used by the MOE with the intent being to design a means for assigning staff to jobs and locations in a systematic manner. Perhaps the needs analysis component of the MIS study could serve to point out weaknesses in the present assignment system and suggest ways to strengthen these. Included in an MIS needs analysis could be the assignment of substitute teachers as well as the reassignment of teachers from oversupplied schools to those where none are

available.

Related aspects of the system-related factors that need review are the Promoción Orientada program to determine how it is being used by teachers. It appears that too many are using it simply to move children out of the classroom regardless of the mastery of skills.

F. Characteristics of Good Teachers

A good teacher is perceived to be one who is involved with the students and their parents, is aware of their progress, shows them respect and receives respect from them, and pushes students to achieve. As such, the good teacher engages in techniques which challenge students and not in such strategies as the copying of materials to fill up time. A good teacher interacts with students in the classroom and explains material.

G. Repetition of Grades

Children in the first two cycles of basic education may repeat a grade if they do not master the skills necessary to move on to the next grade. However, due to the Promoción Orientada system, there is a tendency to promote students even when they do not know how to read and write. Another reason why students may repeat a grade is because of the phenomenon of estudios saltados, where a student may enroll in school one year then skip the next, and return the subsequent one.

H. Importance of School as a Childcare Facility

There was almost no mention of schools functioning as childcare facilities. In general, parents send their children to school to be taught basic reading and writing skills. Parents have aspirations for children to improve their lot and make gains beyond those the parents will ever reach. Thus, they value school for its function as a vehicle for potential status enhancement. On the other hand, some parents are more likely to need the children to work and contribute to the family than be financially unproductive while in school.

I. Media Education

There was overwhelming skepticism regarding the use of radio and television for educational programming purposes. Most viewed the recent failure of the experiment with television as an indicator that there is just no way to make such an idea work. Among the major obstacles mentioned were:

- o Perceptions of past failures;
- o The lack of training of personnel in implementing such programming;
- o The inability of staff to use the equipment properly as well as the failure to maintain adequately or account for the equipment;
- o The view of the broadcast media, especially TV, as an entertainment vehicle impeding its use for educational purposes among the masses; and
- o The lack of electrical services to all parts of the country.

Finally, it was noted that teaching is an interactive process and no interaction takes place through media programming. Some did state that perhaps radio programming could be used for reinforcement of lessons taught in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS: If radio programming is to take place, USAID may want to include an interactive component in the programming. It is important that the next component of this project carefully define the target audience and determine, through investigations, the needs of that audience so that the format and content of the programming is useful. One initial role that radio programming might assume could be to carry out a large part of the activities of a social marketing program as suggested earlier.

J. Salaries

Low salaries for service providers have several unintended consequences. First, for those already teaching, it forces them to seek other jobs to make ends meet. This results in insufficient time for planning, lack of attention to students in the classroom, and a loss of the sense of professionalism. Another unintended consequence is the attraction to the profession of those who see in teaching a quick way to begin earning a salary. Thus, persons enter into teaching as a temporary move while preparing for another career. There is little dedication to the profession and to meeting the moral obligations required of a teacher.

RECOMMENDATION: The MOE should consider adjusting salary structures for teachers to reflect cost-of-living increases as well as inflation rates. USAID may wish to consider using the economic analysis completed through this Task Order as a basis for assisting the MOE in determining the feasibility of increasing salaries given the present budgetary constraints.

USAID also might consider funding a wage and salary study to identify alternative sources of revenues for teachers salaries and to determine appropriate salary increases for teachers and principals, as well as appropriate scheduling of increases.

K. Factors Inhibiting Enrollment

Parents may not send children to school for two basic reasons. Because of family disintegration, a mother may need the child to begin working and contributing financially to the well-being of the family. Thus, a child may be taken out of school as early as 10 years of age. In the rural areas, children are more likely to be needed as unpaid laborers in helping parents with the care of the land or livestock.

Also, costs for schooling may be making it prohibitive for parents to continue to send their children to school. It was estimated that, depending on the region, costs per child for schooling could easily run between C.200.00 and C.700.00 per year. This includes enrollment and tuition fees, cost for clothing, transportation, and for food. Given the high unemployment and subemployment levels in El Salvador, many parents cannot afford such costs, and are thus forced to keep their children out of school.

L. Focus Group Experience

The focus group experience was largely positive for the participants. The general perception was that they were happy to participate in providing input toward improving the educational system. Generally, most were happy that they were finally being taken into consideration with regard to their professions or their children's education.

RECOMMENDATION: The focus group technique could be incorporated as a formative evaluation tool by USAID to assess periodically the effect of its programs in education. The groups could serve a twofold function, providing USAID with information on selected issues in a quick and efficient manner. Such information could be useful in readjusting project goals or activities as needed. Also, the groups could serve as a vehicle for implementers and users of the system to "vent" and be heard, i.e., to play an active role in the process. The Mission could identify local staff that could be trained in the conduct of the groups and in the elaboration of reports.

It would be ideal if the MOE could use the strategy to open

lines of communication with its personnel. Their staff also could be trained to conduct focus group to obtain information on the needs of the users and providers of the educational services. As in every case, however, the MOE must understand that personnel to be trained must be willing to be objective; must be capable of being detached; must not use the groups to advance a particular point of view; must be willing to take some abuse from participants; and must be willing to adapt to the status level of the participants.

V. DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Two related findings from this work have implications for development policy. It was found that administrators, teachers, and parents view the content of the curricular program as lacking in applicability for the local context. The basis for this, it was noted, was their sense that they, the implementers and users of the service, had not played a part in its development. Related to this was the finding that participants viewed the focus groups as a means of being heard by the "powers that be".

In a sense, the participants felt they were disfranchised from a process of particular concern to them. After all, the process of educating children is the basis for the formation of national personality and the society's value system. Of concern to all was the deterioration of this value system, perhaps, in part, because the program was perceived to be in the hands of foreigners. It was felt in the loss of the professional ethic among teachers. It was felt that schools no longer inculcated such important values as order, punctuality, and respect. The solution, from the participants' perspective, was a return to the basics and the reintroduction of moral and civic education in the classroom.

The lesson here, then, lies in the lack of incorporation of the implementers and users of a program in its development. One basic principle in management is that change is much more acceptable when there is consensus in the need for change and a vested interest is created among group members in a new program. The most feasible way to create that vested interest is by providing for participation in its creation. That principle must be applied in the situation under study. A tripartite involvement must occur with the educational system in El Salvador. The MOE, the service providers, and the parents must all play a part in the development of educational programs, if not policy.

ANNEXES

APPENDIX A:
Topline Reports

**Administrators
North-Central Region
Topline Report**

Participants:

Ten female administrators were interviewed in a small semi-urban center in the North-Central region of the country. These were eight principals of schools, one psychologist and regional administrator, and one administrator of "nucleo". All had been working within the realm of education either as teachers or administrators for over 15 years; the range of experience as educators was from 15 years to 26 years.

All but two were married and had children; one was single while the other was widowed. They lived in Cojutepeque or in the immediate vicinity although they were principal of distinct schools. Except for the regional administrator, all indicated that they worked other jobs including as teachers or administrators in other schools. The married women reported that their husbands also worked, a circumstance that helped ease the rough economic situation for them in El Salvador.

Context:

The group took place in a classroom of the school Anita Alvarado off the main plaza. In another classroom, a teacher conducted a class that was well attended despite this being a Saturday. We were told that the teacher was making up hours as he had missed a school day that week. Also, the teacher was running the children through their dance routines which would be performed for the national independence day celebrations.

The school grounds were very clean. A row of 15 bathrooms was off in one side of the grounds; three water faucets and cement sinks separated the area between the school and the bathrooms. The classroom used for the session was well equipped with desks, a TV and some filing cabinets. The room was also quite litter-free.

The administrators walked in and looked apprehensively at the circle of desks in the classroom. They were invited to sit at any one of the desks. Some began sitting in an area behind the circle and were directed to please occupy one of the seats in the circle. One, the Nucleo Director, walked in browsing through her appointment book. After an initial introduction, the group was began. The psychologist/regional administrator made several attempts at the start of the group to set the tone for the session. She spoke in elevated phrases using hand gestures that suggested that she was in charge. She was quickly leveled by the moderator who cut her short on several comments. After a while, the other administrators also cut her short when she attempted to take charge of the group by contradicting what she said.

Perspective on the Educational System:

The administrators characterized the educational system as deficient ("deficiente") principally because it does not meet the needs of the child in the respective Salvadoran communities which demand another type of system. According to them, the child should be the central focus of any curricular program. However, the curricular program is imposed from San Salvador by technicians, who many times, do not know about the needs of the various communities. Those needs, interests and problems of the students should be the base for development of curriculum. These needs were the need for nutrition, health, and the need for the child to feel secure and happy.

Curricular programs, according to these administrators, are developed to justify a program funded by some foreign agency. Many times, once such a program is designed, the money simply disappears, and there are no fruits of this labor that reach the level of the schools.

Initially, the administrators indicated that the present curricular program was a bad one as it did not reflect the needs of the children. However, one "Directora de Nucleo" insisted that the program was good because of its flexibility. That is, it presents a content area and suggests materials to use. However, teachers are allowed to adapt the content to the conditions appropriate to the community where they teach. Others then agreed that this was a good aspect of the program. The problem remains, though, that many teachers due to inadequate teacher preparation through the existing system, do not know how to use it. And, even if they did know how to use the program, the lack of adequate resources such as textbooks, was another stumbling block.

The parents themselves also could be obstacles to the delivery of high quality education. Parents, according to administrators, may value education but do not have the resources to send their children to school. In other cases, parents do not value education at all. A third aspect to this problem, according to them, is that parents may have little education and are unable to assist children with their chores.

However, the reality of El Salvador is that there is a war, they stated. Also, an estimated 80 percent of the families are single parent families with women as heads of households. Women have lost husbands to the war or to migration to the U.S. Thus, there is familial disintegration. Children are unable to attend schools or pulled out at a young age to help with family earnings.

According to the participants, another factor that contributes to the deficiency of the educational system is the lack of adequate nutrition for the children. A child might very well have to get up early to gather wood to sell or for the home.

Returning home, that child might not receive a morning meal; instead s/he might be given C 0.30 to buy something to eat. The child may very well buy some "churros", and that would be breakfast. Two participants mentioned instances of children having fainted in class due to hunger. They adamantly stated that a child who receives some nourishment achieves more than an inadequately nourished one. ("Los niños estan mal alimentados; no rinde lo mismo que uno alimentado a lo normal".) Some suggested that nutrition could be at least improved in the school stores. Instead of selling soda pop, candies and cookies, there ought to be an attempt to sell nourishing products.

Another factor that contributes to the deficient educational system is the quality of teachers in the schools. Participants reported that there are teachers no longer interested in teaching as a career. ("Hay aquellos que no toman su trabajo como vocación"). The administrators mentioned that many teachers see the job as a means for preparing for other careers. There is no place, as there was before, where the preparation of teachers instills in them the idea of teaching as a vocation. In the past, all teachers were trained in the "Ciudad Normal". There, students learned how to teach as well as learned the value of teaching ("la capacitación moral para la vocación"). This institution no longer exists. Now any accredited institution can produce teachers, and any "Bachillerato" thinks that they can teach.

A related factor is the shortage of teachers for some areas. In their subregion, administrators indicated that they had hired some teachers who were certified but had not yet received a position. These teachers are paid C 200 a month for assisting in the school. Administrators stated that they could not understand how there could be shortages of teachers when there were so many waiting assignment.

Factors that keep children out of school:

Due to the war, production has declined and jobs are scarce. Thus, there is unemployment and subemployment. Many families, according to the participants, are unable to meet the basic needs for food and shelter. Thus, they pull children out of school to help them earn money for the family. The principals mentioned that they knew of cases of children working as maids at the age of 10-12. Also, lacking the adequate resources to finance a child's education, parents were forced to keep a child out of school as without a uniform it was unlikely that a child would be allowed to enroll in a school.

Salaries:

According to the administrators, salaries are low. They estimated that the average salary for a teacher was C 1400 per month. One compared that to the salary for a janitor who earns C 1070. There was no investment, she pointed out, in the training of the latter. Thus, teacher salaries would have to be increased

so that they can meet their everyday living expenses.

One administrator quickly pointed out that there was another aspect to this issue. She noted that there was also a decline or lack of esteem or recognition for the teacher on the part of the Ministry. Another added that she had heard Ministry personnel say that teachers do not give enough for their profession. She quickly added that teachers had given a lot, even their lives. ("El gobierno presente dice que no se da lo suficiente, cuando los maestros han dado hasta la vida!"). The Ministry should, according to them, give them the recognition they deserve, although this, in and of itself, was not sufficient compensation for all their work. Such recognition might even come through groups such as the present one where an official of the MOE sits with them to listen to what they have to say with regard to the educational system.

What can be Improved:

Administrators recommended the following changes in the educational system. There must be some type of organization and planning especially with regard to the creation of teaching positions and the awarding of these. According to participants, the assignment of teachers should be based on the needs of the communities. Several mentioned that they knew of instances where more teachers than needed were assigned to one school. Thus, one teacher spent the whole day with nothing to do. In other areas, especially the rural areas, there was a dramatic demand for teachers. The assignment of positions, according to them, should be based on need and capability and not on a political basis ("Por capacidad y no compromiso politico").

Administrators mentioned that they would like to see teachers assigned to the school in the community where they live. In this manner they lessen the problems with teacher absenteeism. Also, this provides teachers with savings in transportation costs. Thus, officials must utilize existing resources in the most effective manner, including teachers and the assignment of them.

Participants sought changes in the development of curricular programs. They mentioned that the programs should be developed according to the needs of the students and by locals instead of by a centralized group or foreigners. Training must accompany any development of the curricular programs instead of merely handing it over to teachers and having them implement it ("En el centro se lo chapusean y luego lo traen y dicen háganlo".)

Training of teachers was also an important aspect that needs improvements, according to administrators. The "Cuidad Normal" ought to be reinstated to provide adequate preparation of teachers. Additionally, training should be continuous and in-service training ought to be implemented immediately before the start or after the close of the school year. This reduces their missing teaching time for training. Compensation should also be provided for teachers receiving such training.

It is imperative, according to the administrators, that teachers receive teaching materials ("material didáctico") There is a great shortage of books for the students. The Ministry should concentrate on providing such materials.

Female Teachers
Marginal Areas, San Salvador
Topline Report

Participants:

Ten female teachers participated in this group. All were primary education teachers with all but one having eight years or more of teaching experience. All had taught the different grades in primary school as well as having taught one year or more in rural areas. Some indicated that they would be willing to return to the rural areas if there was no war as they fear becoming victims of the conflict. Others stated that they would not return to the rural areas, for their families were in San Salvador, and they preferred to be with their families.

Most reported a preference for teaching first or second grade; one indicated that she preferred to teach fourth grade. The preference for first grade was based on the innocence of the children and their easier manageability.

All except one indicated that they had received their training in the Escuela Normal. The one reported that she lacked university credentialing although she had accreditation ("maestra empirica").

All were married and had one to two children and usually one in the primary schools.

Context:

The group was conducted in a conference room of the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador. The original site for the group had been a school in the Zacamil area of the city. However, due to concerns for security of the moderators, the local Mission suggested that optional sites be found. Given the lack of time to search for other locales for the group, it was quickly arranged for the Sheraton. Initially, the group of women was apprehensive about the group. They were cautious about stating their opinions. At one point, the moderator asked if there were any questions he could answer to make them feel more relaxed and trusting. Although no one asked questions, such an approach seemed to break the ice. After this, candid opinions were quickly and easily presented by the participants.

Role of Education:

The role of education, according to the teachers, was to develop the personality of the child. Through this process, they believed, they also form the Salvadoran ideology and idiosyncrasies.

However, the teachers sensed that education should be more than the mere imparting of information. Through the educational system, they believe, the government must address more basic needs such as for food and adequate healthcare. Additionally, through education, there must be a war against illiteracy.

Presently, the curricular program does not reflect the needs of the students, they noted. The program consists of courses on the national language, math, social and natural sciences and on reading and writing. The needs of the students are more basic—such as food and good health. Also, the curricular program should stress civics and art as well as the other aspects of the curriculum. The existing program, they added, had been part of a movement for reform. This reform, however, was based on a model for a developed country and is not appropriate for El Salvador. One teacher observed that the model for the program had been Japan.

The curricular program assumes that the first grade student knows how to read and write, but that is not the actual case. Many do not attend preschool. Even if they did, the teachers stated, preschool programs are not part of the educational structure. As a consequence, there is no continuity between preschool and first grade. Preschool, according to teachers, is basically geared toward teaching children psycho-motor skills. A related problem is that in the rural areas, there is no preschool program. Thus, first grade may have children from 5 to 9 years of age.

A more basic need that must be addressed, according to the teachers, is the need for food. There ought to be programs in the schools to feed the children. Many come to school having had a poor meal or without having had anything to eat. This affects their ability to pay attention in class.

The MOE, according to the participants, ought to be concerned with providing them with the basic materials to be able to work in the classroom. After all, they noted, if the Ministry does not provide them with materials, they cannot do their work ("Si el Ministerio no nos da nada, no podemos dar nada"). Parents contribute money, but many of them cannot afford to contribute even a minimal amount for the purchase of paper and pencils. The Ministry, they added, had provided some notebooks. However, these are of such bad quality that upon opening them, the pages fly apart. Teachers indicated that many times they provided the material for the students.

According to participants, one change that can be implemented to better the educational system is the return of the "Escuela Normal" for teacher training. This would allow for teachers to begin once again to see teaching as a vocation and not simply as a means of earning a salary. New teachers, they noted, are not prepared for teaching as a career. By instituting the "Escuela Normal", a number of things could be resolved: a) it would ensure that those who are training teachers know what they

are doing; b) it would give education the importance it deserves within the matters of the State; d) it would instruct potential teachers in the proper teaching strategies instead of having rely solely on memorization as a technique; and e) it would de-politicize education assuring that education would be a continuous process not conditioned on the whims of whatever new government came into power.

A problem in the schools, according to the teachers, is that they must handle too many children. A class of 64 students is not unheard of. Usually, they have to manage a large, heterogeneous class of 50 students. Not much teaching can be done with such a large class, they complain.

Teachers also mentioned that there ought to be one teacher per classroom instead of having one teacher handle multiple classes. Also, assignment of administrators to posts within the Ministry itself ought to be on the basis of capabilities and not on the basis of the role they play for a political party. Assignment of teachers to posts should also be handled better, they noted. Presently, due to the educational reforms, there is an informal manner of assigning teaching positions. Anyone with some amount influence ("cuello") can get a post. The certainty of obtaining the post one wants is increased by paying officials for that post. One teacher noted that she had been in the rural area for quite some time and was up for a change in location. However, she had been waiting several years for an assignment in San Salvador. She assured herself of the position she wanted by paying C 500.00 to the proper official and has been at that post for seven years.

One problem they noted was that of placing teachers in the rural areas. Teachers stated that going to the rural areas was a costly and difficult endeavor. Usually, a teacher would not live in the community where they were sent. Thus, they incurred transportation costs; one indicated that she had paid C. 6.00 daily to get to her site. Other difficulties related to working in the rural areas included the scarcity of places to eat, the scarcity of food, the long walks to the schools without proper transport and the lower salaries for rural teachers. The participants indicated that although urban and rural teachers are to earn the same wages, their experiences had been that they earned less when they worked in the rural areas.

Teachers mentioned that supervision was lax on the part of administrators. When supervisors did come around, they noted, it was to criticize. Supervision, they added, ought to be based on the needs of the teachers and not on those of the administrator. Too many times, teachers indicated, it seemed that supervisors were there to point out teachers' negative aspects without examining the why's of such behavior ("Van a criticar y no buscan el porque").

Training is an important part of the system and, according to the teachers, ought to be reinstated. They mentioned that

before the reforms, teachers frequently received training seminars. Now, there were few seminars and those that were provided were often badly organized. With the latter, they stated, they ended up losing valuable teaching time.

Parental Role in Education:

Parents do not have time to become involved in the education of their children, according to the teachers. They are more concerned with having to earn a living.

Parents ought to be involved in the education of their children, teachers noted. They ought to review their homework and take an interest in their progress. However, teachers noted, they knew of instances where children have to begin working at the age of 7 or 8 to help out at home. Also, teachers stated that parents cannot help out since the latter cannot read or write. There ought to be schools for parents to address this problem.

Salaries:

Low salaries play a big role in creating a poor educational system, according to the teachers. Their reported earnings are of C. 1200 per month. All have another job, usually teaching at a private school. They usually do their planning during the weekends. An adequate salary for a teacher, they stated, was C. 2000.00 per month. Given such a salary, teachers would not have to work two sessions. Also, teachers complained that they knew of colleagues who had not been paid since April. Due to a suspension of hiring, some teachers were left in limbo; they had work but never had been paid for that work.

Good Teacher/Bad Teacher:

A bad teacher, according to participants, misses a lot of work. Usually, their classroom is taken over by a colleague. These teachers claim that they rarely miss work given their "love for the children" ("el amor hacia los niños").

Satisfaction with the System:

Teachers indicated that they had low levels of satisfaction with the system. They noted that, at a minimum, a program was provided, school buildings were in place, there were teachers and some teaching was taking place. They also mentioned that at least there was no reversal. Others, however, argued that it could be said that there was a reversal given the lack of adequate preparation of teachers, the forced passing of students whether they mastered skills or not and the low salaries for teachers. They did state, however, that they based the promotion of a student to the next grade on exams. These were exams which they developed for their own classrooms. The exams, though, were only used in third grade and above.

Improvements to the Program:

To improve the program, teachers suggested that the Ministry remove the Promoción Orientada; reverse the educational reforms; provide teachers with authority in the classroom; increase salaries; reinstitute civic and moral educational programs in the schools; provide nutrition and health care; provide more administrative personnel so that teachers do not have to take leave from the classroom to talk with a parent; provide teaching materials and materials for students; and provide auxiliary staff for teachers. Priorities for them would be an increase in salaries, provision of adequate nutrition for children, and provision of teaching materials ("material didáctico") in that order.

Educational Programs through the Media:

Teachers indicated that educational programs through television had been tried and had failed. One important reason, according to them, is that students as well as others sought to receive a regular school certificate as a measure of credibility of the student's achievement. Without a certificate, a person's education achievement may be pretty worthless. Additionally, teachers noted that the TV sets used in the media programs that had been carried out could now be found in the homes of a number of administrators.

School Administrators
Marginal Areas of San Salvador
Topline Report

Participants:

Nine Principals and Assistant Principals as well as one Director de Nucleo participated in this group. All were married men with children. These were middle aged men in their late 30's, forties, or early 50's. Most had been involved in education for a number of years, with one having been working in education for over 30 years.

All indicated that they worked at least two jobs, and most reporting working three jobs including teaching or administering to private schools, working double shifts in public schools or working in adult schools. All were principals of schools in the northern fringes of San Salvador and served students from marginal communities in that area.

Context:

This group was conducted in one of the conference rooms at the Sheraton Hotel. It was originally scheduled for one of the schools in a marginal barrio. However, because of questions of security, it was rescheduled for the hotel at the last minute.

Participants were somewhat skeptical about the moderator and note-taker. At the start of the group, they asked for the purpose for the group session and who the two individuals represented. They sought and received more background information on the two individuals and were satisfied with the explanations only after EH presented a business card from J&A.

The group lasted approximately two hours. Upon ending the group, participants suggested that the MOE conduct groups such as these to obtain information from them about the state of the system. In this manner, there would be direct links between the administrators, developers of the system and the providers of the service.

Perspective on the Educational System:

According to the Administrators, the MOE has established a scaling system of six grades for teachers. As all were teachers, they are also guided by this system. They added that most were in higher levels within this scaling system. That is, six were Level 1 teachers and 3 were Level 2. An administrator could automatically be upgraded every five years with a corresponding increase of salary of C 50.00.

Administrators saw their responsibilities as including training of teachers through monthly seminars, administering to schools including looking after the resources, evaluating teachers, and examining teachers and students to determine levels of skills and qualities. Also, principals mentioned that another important role that they fulfilled was that of substitute teacher. When teachers were out, they filled in for the missing teacher. Other duties that they carry out were the delegation of responsibilities to teachers in an effort to train them in administration and the interacting with students to discover their strengths and weaknesses.

Role of Education:

Participants indicated that the role of education was to look after the integrated development of children ("desarrollo integral de los niños"). Through education, teachers look after the intellectual, emotional, personal and social as well as physical development of a child.

The accomplishment of the above has fallen short, commented the principals, for a number of reasons. One reason has been that the education of children has been too theoretical where children look at books and learn theory. There has been no familiarity with practical education. Another important reason for falling short of the objective is the lack of schools in the rural areas. There, even if students wanted to go beyond the sixth grade, they cannot because of the lack of resources and schools.

Principals commented that the ideal situation would arise if the development of curricular programs was based on a child's needs ("Que se hiciera algún programa de acuerdo a las necesidades del niño"). Unfortunately, they stated, what exists is borrowed and imposed by the State. They reported that the program, however, is a good one. Teachers can change the program to suit the needs of their students. The problem arises in that there are no resources available to teachers in working with the program. Many times, they indicated, there is no chalk; no paper; or there are no desks. Thus, administrators added, the problems lies not with teachers or with the program but in the lack of resources.

Another aspect to this deficiency in the educational system was the lack of performance of the students because of malnutrition. Many go to sleep in class because they are hungry. This contributes to their not learning in school.

They did note that many teachers are no longer as committed to their jobs as had been in the past. In fact, they added, many persons enter teaching as the most rapid way to earn a wage as teachers can begin earning a salary within two years after graduating from their "bachillerato".

Principals were asked to rate the system on a scale of 1 to 10, with the latter representing the best score. Overall, the

participants assigned a five to the educational system noting that there was a benevolent base with which to work and which could be adapted.

Retention in Grades:

Administrators indicated that enrollment rates are low. They estimated that of 100 students who are eligible for enrollment, 50 percent may enroll. Of those, 70 percent would pass to second grade.

Participants indicated that teachers had to pass a student from first to second grade. A regulation existed which required automatic passing of these students who scored at least a 3 on exams. However, sufficient numbers of students were retained. One reason for this situation was that students were unable to master the skills which allowed them to move forward. Parents, for example, would have their children miss school to get temporary jobs.

An administrator commented that another reason for retaining students in grades was to slow their entrance into the workforce. As there are not enough jobs in the marketplace, they hold back students to prevent their entering the labor market and competing for scarce jobs.

Good Teacher/Bad Teacher Characteristics:

Principals listed out the qualities of a good teacher. According to them, a good teacher is concerned for the welfare of the children. S/He sets goals and always meets them ("Siempre logra su objetivo"). A good teacher plans, is organized and participates in the community. Administrators commented that through the instructional program, teachers can incorporate the community context into the classroom. Finally, a good teacher seeks continually to upgrade his/her skills.

[At this point, one participant took out a magazine and displayed it to the moderator mentioning that subscribing to magazines was a good way of keeping abreast of developments in the field of teaching. The moderator noted that the magazine was dated 1977, and asked whether there was a problem in receiving current materials. The response he provided was that he had an interest in a particular article in that issue. Usually, there was no problem in receiving current issues of magazines.]

A bad teacher, reported the group, was not capable of maintaining discipline in the classroom ("No domina la disciplina de los niños"). However, they noted that circumstances were more influential in what happened in schools than the existence of bad teachers. They cited the lack of adequate pre-service training as having contributed greatly to the decline in the quality of teachers. The MOE had shut down the "Normales" because they were preparing too many teachers. The overabundance

of teachers resulted, according to the administrators, in less frequent and smaller increases in salaries.

Salaries:

The principals mentioned that salaries for both their level of administrators as well as those of teachers were low. They indicated that both could earn about the same depending on the experience of the teacher. New teachers earned an estimated C 1125.00 monthly; every 5 years, they earned an increase of C50.00. And this, they reported, was for an average twelve hour workday. An ideal salary would allow them to focus all their energy on their educational functions; they would have time to plan, to spend with teachers and would not be tired from having had to work in other jobs. When queried as to an ideal monthly income, principals responded that the figure was C. 3000.00.

Participants added that they could not even afford to retire since the monthly income would be reduced from C1600.00 to C 1200.00 upon retirement. Of a monthly income of C. 1540.00, a principal would net somewhere around C. 1200.00. One, who had worked the 30 years needed for retirement was emphatic in noting that he does not plan to retire as he cannot because his salary would drop. Another stated that he had to bring food to the table and thus, could not afford to retire ("Por los tomates, no me jubilo").

Responsibilities of the MOE:

Principals viewed the role of the MOE as that of introducing educational systems. However, they characterized the job that had be done as weak since the system was badly organized and poorly planned. The curricular program, they added, was not fully developed as it did not cover all areas. Also, the participants said that the schools suffered from lack of attention.

Factors that keep Children from School:

Participants cited a number of reasons why parent may keep children out of school. Among the most important ones are that parents may use the child as a financial resource. Principals estimated that 50 percent of parents may have their children working in such jobs as selling candy, singing in buses and others. The other side of the coin, however, was that children also want to work. The aspirations of children in urban areas are to get a job upon leaving the 9th grade, they noted.

Another aspect of the problem associated with the economic situation of parents is the high cost of sending a child to school, according to the principals. School children wear uniforms, they noted, to distinguish them from vagrants. The uniforms also afford children respect while on the streets. Most parents, however, cannot buy their child a uniform. Thus, the

child either may not be able to attend class or may not want to attend class because s/he has no uniform.

In addition to buying the child a uniform and other clothing necessary for school, principals mentioned that they ask parents to pay a certain cost upon enrolling that child in school. That money, they stated, is used to purchase pencils, paper, chalk, and other materials that the MOE should be providing. At times, parents cannot afford those costs.

Finally, principals noted that another reason for children not attending school is because of the lack of awareness of parents that the child needs to receive an education. Many parents do not value education, and so do not send their children to school.

Principals indicated, however, that despite the problems in the educational system, it was worth it to parents to send their children to school. After all, they noted, society has to invest in its citizenry. They do not want an illiterate citizen as "the dumber the person, the more manageable [he is]" ("Entre mas burro, mas manejable").

Parental Involvement in Schools:

Principals indicated that there was no parental involvement in their schools. Parents would come if they were asked to attend a session. Even then, it was usually the mother who attended. Parents, especially fathers, do not participate because they have to work.

Another reason for lack of parental participation is the prevalence of single parent families. Children usually live with the mother or their grandparents. They usually have little time to give to school.

DROPOUTS Topline Report

Participants:

Seven young, primary school dropouts participated in this group. All were adolescents between the ages of 12 and 16. None had finished primary school; in fact, the highest grade attained was fourth, and one had had no primary school education. Most lived with only one parent, usually the mother. One indicated that he lived alone in a car repair shop. He added that he saw his mother once a week when she stopped by the shop. As she was a ~~llv-w-iH IIIH~~, they did not have much of an opportunity to visit. Another came from a family of twelve, although only five lived at home. Only one had a father living at home, and he had no mother as she had died when he was six. Three were originally from rural communities while the others had been born in San Salvador. Only one indicated that they had a TV set at home; only one reported having a radio at home. Their mothers had low levels of education, usually having reached the third or fourth grade.

Participants reported that they did housework to help around the house. Their chores included gathering wood, cleaning up the dishes and the house. All indicated that they lived in "Champas", laminated steel structures, in the colonias. One worked as a mechanic's helper while another indicated that he worked in a body shop repairing dents; another worked gathering wood and selling it at the marketplace; a third was a construction worker's assistant; while the rest had no steady jobs. The two car repair assistants stated that they earned C. 15.00 per week; the preadolescent who sells wood reported that he earned C. 2.00 per day. Another who sells wood sporadically indicated that he earns C. 0.50 per week. The assistant in construction work reported an income of C. 5.00 per week.

Several had nicknames which they used during the group. Among the nicknames were the following: Cicuta (Hemlock) for one whose left arm hung limply at his side as a result of an accident and who, according to the others, seemed to have more than his share of bad luck; Tin, a shortened version of his full name; Caballo was one of the smallest in the group; Burro, because he at one time had had a very large belly; and Sol, in reference to his having a short fuse. One had just had a birthday the previous day. When asked how he celebrated, he stated that there was no money for celebrations thus he had had no festivities.

Context:

These youth were recruited by "Pele - El Negro", a seventeen year-old. His instructions were to comb the various marginal areas around San Salvador and find 8 to 10 adolescents who had not finished primary schooling. "Pele" was able to convince only seven of them to attend the session. Some with whom he spoke, according to Pele, could not be recruited because they were members of gangs, and he could not assure that there would be no problems. Others who had been recruited and awaited transportation were unwilling to come because they were skeptical of the purpose of the group. They had recently been discharged from a youth correctional institution and were reluctant to board a vehicle being used to transport them to the site of the discussion. The vehicle had government license plates.

The group was held in a conference room at the Sheraton Hotel. Given the security concerns of the Mission, there was no time to arrange for an alternate site. The setting influenced the manner in which the discussion evolved, giving it much more of a formal nature than desired.

Today's Youth:

Participants were asked to characterize today's youth. They described adolescents as lost; the youth are using drugs, smoke cigarettes, and do not help out their families. When queried as to whether they use drugs, all indicated that they did not. However, several commented that they do smoke cigarettes. The cigarettes are those handed out by friends since the product is too expensive for them to buy.

School Experience:

Participants indicated that a school day usually began with one cleaning the building. They reported that the school assigned a particular day to each student as his/her day for cleaning the building.

Once in class, the students reported that they sang their national anthem and recited their pledge to the flag. When questioned as to how many still knew the anthem, five of the seven stated that they knew it. When asked to recite the words, one began reciting the anthem; another chimed in during the third line and by the fifth line, five of the seven were singing the anthem. When questioned as to whether they knew the pledge to the flag, the same five automatically began reciting the lines. During this whole time, these preadolescent/adolescent dropouts looked at each other straight in the eye and seemed to have dropped their guard as they were swept up in the patriotic fervor of the moment.

After the pledge, they were asked if they wished to go back to school. All indicated that they would return to school if they received an opportunity. Most stated that they would have

continued going to primary school had it not been for the lack of adequate clothing. One commented that he had attempted to register in school after a lapse of one year, but there had been no room in the school closest to his house.

When asked if they would return to school given the opportunity, they hesitatingly responded that they would. They would like to learn to read and write as well as learn the alphabet ("conocer las letras").

Role of Education:

The participants indicated that education functioned to teach children respect. Also, they reported, education was an eye-opener. They added that schools should teach children in the primary levels the alphabet as well as how to read and write. They would also like to see the program teach basic things such as math problems geared to experiences the child has everyday ("Como cuando mandan a alguien al mercado y les dicen compren esto y esto y uno va y tiene que saber cuanto traer de cambio").

When asked how they would rate the educational system, participants indicated that they would give it an 8, 9, or 10 because of the dedicated teachers they had had. One reported that he would assign it a 0 due to the fact that it had taught him nothing.

Good Teacher/Bad Teacher:

A good teacher, according to the participants, provides a good education. A bad teacher, they added, has no interest in the students and does not bother to explain materials. A bad teacher he had once had, reported one of the teenagers, simply wrote material on the blackboard then left to talk with other teachers, leaving students alone in the classroom to copy the material. They never saw the teachers in the community, according to the participants.

Parents and Education:

The participants reported that their parents generally went to conferences with teachers when they were asked to go in. Usually the mother visited with the teacher and looked after their progress. Most indicated that they would have liked to have continued but the costs (uniform, clothing, registration, school supplies) made it prohibitive. Additionally, they stated that their parents would have liked for them to continue. One noted that he knew of a friend whose father, when they lived in the rural area, would make the friend sit on a board with nails when he got word that the child had misbehaved in school.

Reasons for Leaving School:

When first asked why they had left school, the participants were quite reluctant to talk. It took three restatements of the

question before a reponse was attained. It appeared that though they understood the question, they wanted to measure their responses by what others might say. In general, the tone of the group was one of seeking approval from the other adolescents around the table rather than in providing candid responses.

The first reponse to the question from one participant was that his mother had not taken him to register for school. Another then spoke up and said that he had to leave school as his father could not afford to send him ("Vivimos mal; no le alcanza a papa para la escuela"). To enroll, he would need five notebooks, pencils, and a bag to carry his supplies. His dad just did not have that kind of extra money.

Another added that he finished one school year, but his mom no longer had money for him to continue the following year. His mom was unable to afford to buy him a uniform, shoes, and supplies. Though he went to school, he was not allowed to enroll

by the school authorities as he had no uniform. Others noted, however, that one is not refused registration simply because he has no uniform.

One noted that some students he knew had left because all they had wanted to learn was to read and write. Once they had achieved these goals, they left.

Cost of Schooling:

To attend school is too costly, according to these youths. Just to register costs C. 15.00; if one needs clothes and supplies, they stated, costs would easily escalate to C. 200.00.

Rural Areas:

Of the three originally from rural areas, two of the participants indicated that they came from rural areas in the northern part of the country. They had left the areas and migrated to San Salvador with their families. One was not too sure as to why they had left. He mentioned in passing that his dad could not work the land anymore. Another, from Ilobasco, noted that they had left because everyone was fighting there ("se estan peleando y se metlan mucho"). These two added, with nostalgia, about how much better things were in the rural area. One noted that in his old place the family had their own trees. There, he mentioned, one did not have to pay for things; they were there for the taking. He added, "If you want a mango, you just go get it from a tree. Here you have to pay ("Si quieres un mango, lo tomas del arbol. Aqui se tiene que pagar")".

The third individual had come from the coastal areas. According to him, the family had migrated to the city so that he could attend school. He countered that he would not return to the rural area. At least in San Salvador, he indicated, there

were schools. There were none in his community. He had been unable to continue in school, he added, because his family could not afford any costs other than food.

FEMALE TEACHERS
Western Region
Topline Report

Participants:

Eleven females participated in the group in Santa Ana. All were teachers from the first through sixth grades in the surrounding area. Four were 6th grade teachers, while each of two taught 3rd, 4th and 5th grades respectively, and the other taught 1st grade. All had over 19 years of teaching experience within a range of 19 to 28 years of service. Nine reported having graduated from the Escuela Normal; one indicated that she also had some university training. The teachers represented nine different schools in the surrounding area.

Context:

The group was held in the APRE regional offices. A corner of the large unpartitioned room (14'x50') was utilized for the group. Initially both male and female teachers had been gathered for the group. Half an hour was spent explaining to the teachers that a mistake had been made and that the male group was to take place at 10 AM. As time was lost in getting started, the introduction was cut short and the moderator initiated the questions after a brief introduction of the purpose and procedures for the discussion. As the group began the discussion, a band lined up on the street in front of the building struck up a march. It became difficult to hear the discussion. As we suspected that such activities would be going on throughout the morning given the independence day celebrations, it was decided to continue with the groups. The windows to the room were shut to cut down on the noise filtering in from the street. However, soon the heat made it impossible to continue the discussion with the windows closed. About an hour into the group, the bands had left providing an opportunity for allowing some breeze into the room by opening the windows.

Education and Role of Teachers:

Education, according to the participants, was a mission carried forth by teachers. That mission is to develop the student ("formar al alumno"). According to them, the center of all activities is the child. The task of the teacher is to educate that child in an integrated manner and to transfer knowledge. The idea is to allow the child to learn habits that will allow him to defend himself ("Para que el niño pueda defenderse"). The goal of the effort, they stated, was to allow the child to develop positive attitudes toward the problems s/he will confront. Among the habits that they desire to teach are responsibility, order, cleanliness, punctuality, cooperation, and

courtesy. They also would like to teach such things as drawing, painting, sewing, and cooking. What they actually teach are such things as drawing and knowledge about the fundamentals such as morals, writing, and math.

Problems in Education:

Although that is the mission, there are a number of factors why it is not being accomplished, they stated. Among the factors which contribute to the failure of education, according to these teachers, are the disintegration of the family, the socioeconomic environment, and the teachers themselves. Familial disintegration, they added, results because the father had to leave the family to look for work ("el padre tiene que irse por falta de trabajo"). The father may go to Guatemala or the U.S.

Also, according to them, the task of a teacher had gotten more difficult and the new teachers are not prepared to take this task on. It is necessary then, they added, to make the new teachers aware of their duties and responsibilities as teachers. Some, they stated, are teaching only to earn a salary. Yet, teaching is a vocation ("Hacer vocación es el propósito. La mayoría solo tiene interés en ganar el sueldo."). This results in teachers simply entertaining the students while in the classroom. Another noted, however, that teachers may be trained in universities, but the actual shaping of teachers occurs in the classroom ("El maestro se hace en el trabajo-- aprende a ser maestro"). The teachers felt that the root of the problem was in the elimination of the Escuela Normal. They noted that a teacher trained in the teachers college and one trained by a Bachillerato Pedagógico were not comparable. The latter, they added, have long hair, teach in inappropriate clothing (T-shirts) and do not look after the cleanliness of their students.

The socioeconomic environment also plays a large role in the education of children. Many children do not have the materials (pencils, paper, etc.) that will be needed in school. Parents, they added, cannot afford it; many times, the child may not even have a home. The teachers noted that parents are asked for financial contributions usually of C. 10.00 per year per family. Although the MOE prohibits such a practice, the teachers stated that this was necessary to be able to buy materials for the students. This does not mean that children do not have access to school, they added. No one is denied access to school; however, there are schools where there is no more room for students. There are others that are highly selective in who they allow to enroll. That is, the latter may take only those students who have received grades of six or higher or only those who have gone to preschool.

Another problem, they stated, was the large number of students they had to teach. An average size class, they noted, consisted of between 40-45 students. They reported class sizes of between 29 and 51 students. The one reporting a class of 51 students indicated that one teacher had left her school.

Thus, the two third grade classes had been joined under her tutelage. In exasperation she added, "I can't, I can't (No puedo, no puedo)". They stated that one result of such large classes is that teachers do not reach that child who is most in need of attention.

Teachers indicated that they do receive materials from the MOE perhaps once per year. However, the materials are usually not enough. They will receive perhaps three small boxes of pencils for the whole school where the enrollment is 300 students. Many times, they noted, the materials go to more privileged schools; many times, these are just stored in MOE warehouses. Other times, the materials may be kept by the Principals. The latter use them to reward their favorite teachers or students rather than distribute them according to need.

Others added that they receive no support from the MOE. That institution, according to the participants, does not provide them with motivation. A teacher, they stated, likes to have good teaching material, chalk, and such, but in the MOE, they find that no avenues open to them. They know of schools badly in need of repair. One in particular, a teacher noted, has its bathrooms sinking. Although in the past, parents have contributed labor to repair the school, in this instance, they can do nothing. Parents in conjunction with teachers have written letters to the MOE requesting that the bathrooms be fixed but have received no response.

Teachers' Salaries:

One factor that contributes greatly to the problems in education, according to these teachers is the lack of an adequate salary for teachers. They characterized their wages as low and compared them to those of a janitor. One added that a tortillera earns more than they do. Some of the teachers in the group teach only one session while others teach two; only one reported teaching three sessions. For those who reported teaching only one session, their husbands' work contributes to their financial stability. One added, "Thank God they are not teachers (Gracias a Dios, no son maestros)" in reference to the husbands' occupations.

Teachers can retire after 30 years of service, they added. However, usually one wants to wait to work more years and receive a higher base retirement pay. Otherwise, a retiree will receive only C. 1200.00 per month after 30 years.

According to these teachers, there are no problems in receiving their paychecks. The process involves the director submitting payroll, having this reviewed and then they get paid. Every month, one check for the entire amount of the payroll is written in the Principal's name. S/he then provides the teachers with their wages. They used to get paid in cash every month, they added. Lately, given the level of violence, the process has

been changed. Now, the Principal will deposit the entire payroll check in a special account, write out a check for each teacher from that account and deposit the checks into each teacher's individual account. They reported no problems in getting paid promptly every month.

Rural Areas:

Rural areas, according to the teachers, have a larger problem than urban centers. All reported that they had taught in rural areas as part of their social work ("trabajo social"). The participants noted that the task of the rural teacher was more difficult because s/he had to teach all the children and all the grades usually from first through third. Also, the teacher had to go look for students as parents hid them from teachers. Parents need their children to provide unpaid labor for the family. Thus, parents will keep the child at home rather than send him/her to school. The participants noted that the parents may be irresponsible in not sending the child to school. However, they also noted that parents may see that there is not much opportunity for getting ahead in the rural areas, and so do not see the value of schooling. They noted that it may be fruitful to provide parents with some type of service also so that they can see some value in education. One noted that perhaps a father could be taught how to work the land while a mother could be given courses in nutrition. In this manner, they would be linking parents, teachers and schools directly.

The participants also noted that teachers in rural areas are not as punctual. They stated that, in the rural areas, a teacher may arrive at the school on a Tuesday and return to the city on a Thursday; yet that person still earns the same salary that they do. When questioned as to whether they felt animosity toward such teachers, the participants stated that they did not. In fact, they noted, they sympathized with them. They knew that such teachers probably were leaving their families behind. Also, they probably had all types of problems getting transportation to the schools, usually having to ford streams, walk several kilometers to the site and stay in places that are not their homes. Also, such teachers were putting their lives in danger. One noted that she had a friend who was shot four times, and she still has a bullet in one leg. Thus, they can understand why teachers do not want to go work in the rural areas.

One teacher indicated that she would go back to the rural area to teach as it had been a very pleasant experience. Another countered that she would not return because all her family was in Santa Ana. Also, she noted, the school where she had worked had been burnt to the ground and everything had been lost. She would not return to such an area where conflict was so prevalent.

Priorities for the MOE:

According to the teachers, there is much that the MOE could do to improve the educational system of the country. That

Institution could begin by permitting the Minister to visit all the schools. In that manner, the official could have first-hand knowledge of the conditions and not have to rely on what others tell him. The latter are only going to show him demonstration sites that are well kept and well-stocked with materials. Also, the MOE should maintain each site adequately so that these do not pose a danger for the students.

Teachers also noted that it is important that the curricular program be revised. Some areas are too long, they indicated, and cannot be covered in the nine months. The basic problem, they stated, is that the program is not based on student needs and cannot be adapted to those needs ("No se adapta al desarrollo del niño en El Salvador").

Also, teachers wished to see the removal of the automatic promotion program. They stated that the result of the Promoción Orientada had been that students lost motivation to learn. They noted that they did not have to learn anything to be promoted to the next grade and so did not worry about performance on exams. Also, parents do not want their child to repeat a grade. While the automatic promotion program had a good intent in trying to avoid traumatizing a child, the end result had been a child that in fourth grade still does not know how to read. Perhaps a solution, they noted, would be to institute national exams for each grade as had been done in the past.

The MOE, they added, also needs to provide frequent training workshops. They stated that many of their colleagues had graduated from the Normal School perhaps 25 years ago and lacked the latest knowledge in terms of pedagogy and the development of the child. A related aspect, they noted, was that there was no order to the placement of teachers in grades or schools. Thus, a teacher could receive a workshop for first grade at the start of the year then find herself teaching fourth grade that same year. Also, they stated, the MOE could improve the supervisory system so that it could actually be carried out. Finally, they noted, teachers need better salaries.

In terms of priorities, the participants stated that the MOE should re-adjust the curricular program to base it on the needs of the children of El Salvador allowing the teachers of the country to participate in the development of the program; the MOE should provide teaching material including texts, pencils and paper; and finally, the MOE should increase the salaries for teachers.

Media Education:

When questioned as to what types of programs could be provided through the media, the teachers stated that educational TV had been attempted and had not been fruitful ("no dió resultado"). They were skeptical about programs through the radio or TV, as they noted that the rural areas would not be served due to a lack of electrical service.

Focus Group Experience:

The teachers stated that the group session had been too short. They noted that it was an interesting experience and they still had much more to talk about. One stated that they realized they had to give the men an opportunity to talk, otherwise they would stay to continue the session. When asked if they would be willing to participate in another session, all indicated that they would. One added that it was good that someone was talking to teachers and taking their opinions into consideration. She added that she had been to a workshop sponsored by the MOE where they were asked to develop some curricular guidelines and content areas. They struggled with the task for three days and developed some good ideas. It was disappointing, she added, when on the third day, the MOE staff presented the teachers in the workshop with the program they were to teach without taking into consideration what the group had developed.

MALE TEACHERS
Western Region
Topline Report

Participants:

Nine male teachers from Santa Ana and its surrounding communities participated in this group. All were elementary school teachers of the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. All reported class sizes of over 30 students with one indicating that he taught a class of over 40.

Seven had studied at the Escuela Normal while one did not report his educational background. Two were Level II teachers. Among the group were two English teachers, another degreed in administration and still another in math. Seven different schools were represented in the group.

Context:

The group was also conducted in the APRE regional offices in the same room where the teachers' group had taken place. The windows in the room were opened to allow for circulation of air. The bands that had been marching by earlier had completed their activities; the parade had moved on to other parts of the urban center.

These participants were very skeptical about the purpose of the group. The moderator had to take about 15 minutes to establish rapport with the participants. They asked whether he represented the MOE. When they were told that the moderator and observer worked for J&A, they sought to know what it was that we were selling. Several examples of other group sessions were listed as a means of establishing trust. Finally, several participants suggested that an agenda be set so that matters of concern to the moderator would be covered as they were ready to talk.

Education:

Teachers characterized the educational system as faulty in a number of respects. They added that the type of meeting such as the one taking place was good because it allowed the real situation to be described. This situation was such that teaching materials did not exist, the evaluative system to allow for promotions was creating problems, the curricular program had changed for the worse and there was a great need for more staff especially for the rural areas.

The teachers indicated that in the past, they had been provided with teaching materials. Now, however, there was less of such materials. Thus, teachers had to end up having to buy such materials for the students.

Also, they noted, students can be promoted now with a final grade of three. It used to be that a passing grade was a five. Additionally, now students in first and second grades can be promoted if they earn a grade of one or simply attend class.

In rural areas, they stated, a principal has to be multifaceted. This position requires that the person be teacher, nurse, secretary and administrator. There is a need for more personnel for the rural areas, they emphasized.

Role of Teacher:

A teacher, according to the participants, also plays many roles while in school. A teacher has to be gardener, administrator, secretary and spiritual counselor in addition to the regular teaching functions performed in the classroom.

Content of Program:

The curricular program for the first six grades of elementary school, according to the teachers, is a very basic program where teachers teach the basic skills in both the urban and rural areas. In these grades, children learn some theoretical knowledge as multiplication and division functions. They also learn how to read and write. They learn the basic things that will help them to defend themselves ("Se aprende a leer y a escribir- cosas basicas que le pueden servir para defenderse"). However, the participants pointed out that they have no teaching materials. Also, they noted, they no longer provide moral education. That and working with parents has been left by the wayside. Parental help is no longer available as it once had been ("Esta ya no es prestada como antes").

In these first six grades, teachers noted, children were taught order, principles, customs and were provided with a formative education.

There was one problem with this educational program. As one noted, El Salvador seemed to be a laboratory for foreigners who come in and try distinct programs without caring what the results are ("El pais se ha convertido en un campo de experimento"). They stated that it would be better if locals are identified and trained to carry on the tasks of curriculum development as they know the reality and the country. They wish to see Salvadorans develop the programs.

Another problem they saw was that there is little follow-up to educational projects. A good project may be scrapped because it was initiated by the former political party, they added. Thus, there is little continuity in educational policy for any

length of time. It also, according to them, seems like a waste of resources. As an example they gave the changes in supervisorial positions. What started out as a supervisor became a Director de Nucleo when the former party was in. Now, they added, rumor is that this will be scapped in favor of the supervisor for a school district. They do not know what this will be, but they know it will bring changes. Thus, educational programs need to be depoliticized ("Que la politica no tenga nada que ver con la educaci3n").

Limits to School Enrollment:

According to the participants, there are a number of reasons why students are unable to complete their schooling. Among these are economic factors, those of transportation and others. The teachers stated that a parent may be unable to send children to school because they cannot afford the uniform, shoes, materials and other basics that are required by the school. They pointed out that in rural areas, a uniform is not required. The uniform, they stated, was viewed as an economy measure for the parents in that they would only have to have two sets of clothing for the child instead of a variety of outfits. Another teacher, however, pointed out that the uniform created a militaristic mentality in the teacher. The idea is to have everyone in order and looking the same. The individuality of each student is lost in the process. Also, he added, many times the uniform becomes a money making opportunity for the school as this is where the material for the uniform is sold. Someone realizes a profit. Additionally, teachers and principals use the uniform as a means of discriminating among students. He stated that he knew of instances where a child with patches in his clothing was denied permission to participate in a parade as the administrator wanted only those with nice uniforms marching and giving the school a good image.

Others took issue with this and stated that if anyone profitted from the sale of the material it was the school. They quickly pointed out that schools often sold the material much cheaper than fabric shops precisely to give parents a break in the price they had to pay. The money from the sale of the material was used, they pointed out, to buy supplies for the school such as pencils, paper, mops, chalk and such. All were adamant, however, that the mere lack of a uniform ought not to be the basis for denying a child the right to go to school. They agreed that the uniform helps the teacher in seeing all children as equal.

Home and School:

According to the participants, what a child learns at home is complemented in the school setting. A child learns how to behave at home and such education is continued in the school. The difference, they noted, was that the child's education is carried out in a systematic manner in the school context.

Teachers stated that parents want their children to know the four arithmetic functions by third grade. By sixth grade, parents want their child to gain mature knowledge. They also want their child to be responsible. In actuality, teachers stated, by the second cycle, the child will know fractions and El Salvador's geography. Others added that during the second cycle, a child moves from knowledge of his community to knowledge of the world and gains better analytical capabilities. Other teachers noted that that was an ideal. The reality was that there were faults in what a child could do in the second cycle because of inadequate preparation during preschool and the first cycle. One reason for this situation was that teachers were lazy.

Good Teacher/Bad Teacher:

Teachers were asked to characterize the qualities that would be exhibited by good teachers and bad teachers. A bad teacher, according to them, was lazy, did not attend classes, did not prepare his lessons, dictates to his students and does not take the time to develop him or herself.

A good teacher, they added, was first of all responsible. A good teacher is inquisitive, prepares and plans his lectures, and is punctual. Such a teacher, they noted, has a good sense for the individual needs of each child; the teacher is aware and knows each student.

Although a teacher may have 40 to 45 students in the class, over the course of the year, the teacher ought to get to know each student, they stated. He or she has 200 days to the school year. In fact, they added, there are some teachers who may have the same students for the first three years (first, second and third grades). A lot of damage can be done, they stated, if a teacher is a bad one and gets the same class of students for three consecutive years ("Un maestro irresponsable por tres años - es desastre").

Role of Parents:

According to the participants, it is the mother who oversees the education of the children. Usually, this is due to the fact that there are many single-parent families in El Salvador; they estimated that perhaps as much as 75 percent of the families are characterized by mothers as heads of households. Fathers tend to abandon families and usually the poorer families suffered from abandonment.

Parents, according to the teachers, have abrogated their responsibilities to helping in school. Parents no longer help out in school nor do they put pressure on the children to complete their homework. However, one noted that perhaps it was the teacher's fault that there was no close link between the two parties. He noted that the appropriate climate to reach out to the parents may not have been created by the teachers. It is important he added, that the parents be made part of the

educational process. Others chipped in by saying that perhaps that could be done by holding teacher-parent conferences during those days when parents were available and by organizing activities where parents could enjoy themselves such as having a program where their children performed.

One drawback to the organization of such activities, they were quick to note, was the lack of support of the principals. In one instance, a teacher stated that his principal had vetoed meetings with parents on Saturdays as he did not want to spend his weekends working in the school.

Salary:

Teachers reported that an average salary for them is C. 1200.00 to 1400.00 per month. Those who work a second session earn an extra C. 200.00. Most reported that they work two sessions and usually work at another school. This does not leave much time for planning during the day, they stated, so a lot of them organize their work at night. In order not to have to do this, they would like to earn between C. 2500.00 and 3000.00 per month. Of course, they added, if they want teachers to teach just one session, the MOE must hire many more teachers.

A related issue is that of how teachers are assigned a position. According to the participants, teachers are hired based on the influence they have in the MOE. Even though there are regulations that stipulate how the hiring is to take place, these are not followed ("Es letra muerta - no se cumple con el reglamento"). Usually, they added, if one has a friend or has influence ("cuello"), they can get a teaching post. The same problem exists with regard to administrative positions. Many times, they stated, the positions in the MOE are given to people because of the role they play in a political party. This creates chaos in educational policy.

Media Education:

Participants were asked to suggest themes that could be covered through a radio or television educational programs. They stated that such an effort had been tried before and it had not worked ("No dio resultado - fue un fracaso"). They indicated that TV sets had been stolen.

Recommendations for Improving the System:

Teachers listed a number of ways to improve the educational system. Among the items they mentioned were to revise the curricular program; to improve the school buildings; to eliminate the existing evaluation system; to conduct workshops with teachers to develop new curricular programs; and increase teachers' salaries to between C. 2500 and 3000 per month while increasing their work hours to 8 per day and limit their role to that of teaching. Also, these teachers recommended that the MOE set up libraries for each school; that they provide teaching

materials; that the MOE play a part in instilling in teachers their sense of responsibility; and that there be schools for adults. Finally, the participants recommended that teaching assignments as well as administrative positions should be awarded on the basis of merit and not due to influence of friends.

In terms of explanations for their recommendations, the teachers noted that many times they wish to carry out their tasks but are confronted with persons who are not trained to assist them. One noted that he was given an exam to administer to his students. As he did not understand certain parts of the exam, he sought help from his Director de Nucleo. The latter was completely unfamiliar with that test. The same could be said of the new teachers, they added. The new teachers do not have the knowledge to teach as the older ones do. Thus, they felt that technical assistance must be provided especially for new teachers in helping them identify children with learning disabilities. Also, there must be constant training of teachers to keep them abreast of the field. One teacher stated that there had been no training seminars for them in something like five years. He knew that they had them in other parts of the country, but for some reason, they were being neglected. They suggested that the MOE conduct a seminar at the national level to take into account the opinions of teachers, to identify the most serious problems and through such a seminar identify solutions and develop a counter-reform and a new educational policy ("... y por medio del seminario que se desarrollara la contra-reforma y la promulgación de una nueva ley").

Teaching materials are scarce, they stated. Those that are available are not used because they easily come apart or are too politicized.

In terms of priorities in the recommendations, they suggested that the MOE focus on providing teaching materials, change the curricular program and on increasing teachers' salaries.

Focus Group Experience

The teachers indicated that the group had been very useful to them. They had exchanged opinions and ideas. One suggested that such ideas serve as seeds that each had planted and would be fruitful in instilling change in their respective schools. They added that through the group, they had been able to identify the discrepancies in the educational system and hoped to work to resolve some of these.

Male, Urban Teachers Topline Report

Participants:

Seven male teachers comprised the group of participants. All had over eight years of teaching experience with a range of 8 to 26 years in the teaching profession. All had taught in the rural areas before being placed in their present positions.

All but one were married men, whose wives worked. Most had 2 to 5 children living with them. One had his children in private schools while the rest had theirs in public schools. All but one had other jobs in addition to their teaching positions. Most taught at private schools in the afternoon, while one was a "microempresario" and another was a salesperson.

Context:

The session was held in the ITCA offices in Santa Tecla. Ten teachers had been recruited, but only seven actually came to the group. According to the recruiters, one stayed away because of the rain while another had had to undertake a last-minute assignment.

The teachers were quite suspicious of the group initially. The moderator began the discussing the procedures and purpose of the group. When he asked whether there were any questions that needed answering so that they could participate in a free and open discussion, several teachers raised their hands to ask that the purpose of the group be restated, that the client be identified, and that the moderator state what would be done with the information. Once answered, the group got underway. The room used was a small office (9'x11'). The group sat around a table. There was enough room left for one person to walk gingerly between the men seated at the table and the walls of the office.

Role of Teachers:

Teachers viewed the role of education as that of developing in children an ability for critical thinking. They also teach, but teaching is merely the transferring of information from one agent to another. A more important role which they play, according to them, is that of educating the children.

Salaries:

All had more than one job. They are forced to look for additional employment because of the low salaries which they receive. A teacher's salary, according to them, is anywhere

from C 1100 -1200 per month. The maximum salary that can be earned is C 1470, and, they noted in frustration, that is after 30 years of service. Participants did point out that teaching affords them an opportunity to work more than one job, so they take advantage of that. Since 1965, when double sessions were introduced, many of them elected to teach two sessions. However, this did not do much for their economic situation since it only augmented their salaries by C 200 for an additional 5 hours of work.

Teachers indicated that they usually received their checks on time. The procedure involved the director submitting a payroll at the Departmental offices, having it approved, having a check made out to him which s/he then cashed and paid the teachers. The payroll is prepared and submitted by the 10th of each month and teachers usually get paid by the 18th. In rural areas, however, teachers lose too much time in having to go to the departmental capital to submit the payroll, wait to see if it is approved, return to their community, come back for the checks and then pay the teachers.

Educational Program:

The educational program taught in the schools is set by the MOE. The MOE, according to the participants, hires specialists to write the curriculum and develop the texts. These "especialistas" are usually foreigners who are not familiar with the Salvadorean context/"la realidad Salvadoren_a". These specialists are desk-bound intellectuals who have not lived the everyday situations that comprise the experience of the average Salvadoran, according to the teachers. The specialists, then, produce curriculum of little relevance to the needs of the communities or the kids they serve. An example cited was the notion that the existing program is sequenced according to a child's chronological age. However, the reality of El Salvador, according to the teachers, is that a classroom may contain multiple ages in it, thus making such a program unadaptable. Another example cited was the case of a training seminar for teachers; that training program focused on materials from schools or education in Chile. These were good, according to one teacher, but did not lend themselves to being adapted to El Salvador. The latter context, they agreed, was the reality of the war which consumed too many resources leaving little for education.

However, the program has its good points and bad points. One good point was that the program covered a number of areas such as social studies, language, math, and science. Additionally, it presented clear objectives for each area. Also, it was rated as good because it is not prescriptive of what every teacher must teach. In that sense, there is flexibility built into the program, and it is the responsibility of each teacher to take advantage of that flexibility to contextualize the content of learning. The weak part of the program arises, according to them, in the fact that many new teachers are not capable of

working with that flexibility. They have not received adequate training to be able to take such a program and work with it.

Teaching Behavior:

Teachers mentioned that they sought to teach and primarily to educate children. However, what they saw in too many and perhaps the majority of their colleagues, was "Comodismo". This pattern of behavior was characterized as giving the least amount of effort during teaching hours. The best indicators of "Comodismo" were instances where teachers simply wrote material on the board for children to copy. Another example was the tendency for teachers to assign lectures from books for students to copy. "Comodismo" arose as a result of teachers being tired, having other tasks to carry out, or from their lack of having teaching as a vocation. Due to low salaries, explained the participants, many teachers have a need to work several jobs. As a consequence, they (especially those who teach in the afternoons) are tired and have little energy to meet the required level of intensity to teach children. Also, because of the low salary, the profession is attracting persons who use teaching as a temporary hold while they attend the university and prepare for other careers ("Una trampolina para poder estudiar para otras carreras".) One unintended consequence is that teachers utilize classroom time to complete tasks related to their university assignments. Finally, the participants noted, teaching is not attracting persons who have a vocation but those who feel the pressure to obtain an income as quickly as possible. The need to become productive members of a family, in many instances, forces a person into the teaching profession where a wage may be had within two years of having received their "bachillerato".

Good Teacher/Bad Teacher Characteristics:

Teachers indicated that good teachers were punctual and responsible ("cumplen con su horario"). Additionally, good teachers pushed their students to achieve; they also had frequent evaluative sessions and were on top of the progress of their students ("lleva un control estricto de ellos para saber donde van").

A bad teacher, on the other hand, was constantly watching the clock, did not become involved with his/her students, usually read the paper in class, and exhibited "comodismo" in the sense that students could always be found copying lectures or from the board in that particular classroom.

Exams:

Teachers indicated that they relied on exams to determine the progress of their students. However, there were no standard exams. Rather, each school programs when exams are to take place and each teacher determines the nature of the exams to be given. A national exam would be impractical given that teachers could not determine what areas of the curriculum could be covered due

to the diversity of ages in the classroom and the size of the class (30-45 students) as well as the lack of sufficient materials in the room.

Whether a student passed to the next grade, according to the teacher, was determined in one of two ways. By regulation, they had to pass any student who scored above a 3 in an exam and had an attendance record of 60 percent or above. That was due to the "Promoción Orientada" reform which stipulated those conditions. However, another option was afforded the teacher through the parents. Parents, through consultations with teachers, could have their child held back a grade if the latter advised accordingly. Teachers noted that there had been a significant downgrade in the educational system since the introduction of the "Promoción Orientada"; this was basically due to the idea that kids were no longer motivated to learn and complete their tasks as they knew that they would be passed to the next grade anyway ([el] muchacho perdió incentivo para tener que pasar. Vió que todo mundo pasa al siguiente grado".)

Teachers noted that private schools still had a more rigorous standard where students had to score a 6 or more on an exam to pass to the next grade. This kept the quality of education in that system at a higher level.

Factors that keep Children from School:

Financial - parents cannot afford to send their child or children to school. In many families, parents need the child to be a wage earning member of the family. Participants estimated that costs for schooling run about C500-700 per year when one considers enrollment costs (C15-40), clothing (uniforms), shoes, transportation, food, and other incidentals such as pencils, and paper. This would be multiplied for those families with more than one child which is the normal case in El Salvador. In many instances, according to the teachers, the result is children skipping a year of schooling then returning the subsequent year. ("estudios saltados - van un año y un año no").

Migration - Many families are migrating to the city due to the war in the rural areas. Most communities are overpopulated and do not have adequate housing. Additionally, many do not have schools. Many urban schools are overcrowded and cannot handle the increasing demand placed on them by the growing school population.

Health -

Parents level of education -

Familial disintegration - Teachers noted that 75% of the families in El Salvador are single parent families headed by a woman. This places a demand on children to contribute financially to the maintenance of the family.

Army - Teachers explained that in the rural areas, the Army is seen as a way of out of dire economic circumstances. Thus, males in the rural areas are only interested in learning to read and write as that is all they need to get inducted into the Army. Upon learning those two skills, they drop out and join the armed forces. A problem foreseen by one teacher is that these youngsters will not want to go back to their communities once their tour of duty is over. Thus, the country and the capital in particular will have a hard time absorbing them into the economy.

What can be improved:

Teachers indicated that the organization and planning aspects of the educational system could stand to be improved. There was bad organization and poor planning. In terms of positions, more teachers were needed in the rural areas. Also, the assignment of teachers to locales should be by exam and based on capabilities. Teacher indicated that training of teachers ought to be continuous through frequent seminars. Finally, they indicated that there must be more material, especially textbooks, if they are to accomplish their goals.

Relation between home and School:

Teachers noted that there was usually a clash between home and school contexts. In school, they stated, teachers try to mold a student according to basic moral principles and "buena cultura". However, the student, in all likelihood, ran into counter models in their family, such as that of an alcoholic father. Even if parents have higher aspirations for their children, parental behavior, according to the teachers, did not contribute to instilling in children the proper outlook to achieve those aspirations. And, they added, what children learn at home has a greater influence over the children than what they learn in school ("[la] educación hogareña es la más prepotente".)

Radio Education:

Radio or TV education has been tried in ES and it did not work ("no tuvo resultados"). It didn't work, according to the participants, because the providers were not trained adequately in how to conduct such an experience as well as in the use of the materials for the educational programs. Also, there is no electricity in some sectors of the country thus, there was no adequate reach to all sectors. Additionally, in some rural areas, according to participants, the resources for carrying out the task were either destroyed by the guerrilla forces, broken and never repaired or appropriated for personal use upper levels of MOE staff. Finally, teachers commented that television was an entertainment medium for the masses in the country. Thus, educational programming through television clashed with the role assigned to it by the greater segment of the population.

Participants recommended that, if an impact was sought, assistance ought to be channeled directly to the target groups. Best of all, however, was to forget about radio or TV and invest all such money in materials and especially texts to assure that every child had access to books. Additionally, such texts ought to be good, high quality materials, and not like the present resources that are voluminous but lack content ("Son voluminosos pero se encuentra solo paja".)

Mothers from San Salvador's Marginal Areas Topline Report

Mothers from San Salvador's Marginal Areas:

Ten mothers whose children attend school in grades 1 to 6 comprised the group of participants. All came from some of San Salvador's Marginal Areas (Zonas Marginales) around Comunidad Zacamil. Zonas Marginales Ram1 Rivas, Trece de enero, and Emanuel Tercera Etapa were represented. Participants estimated their communities' population at 300 to 500 families.

Participants had 3, 4 or 5 children in their families. Some of these women are heads of household. All have at least one child attending a public school. Besides their household chores, some said they work. Selling produce and helping on a community housing project were mentioned as working activities.

Context:

Ideally, the group would have met in a setting more familiar to the participants, usually an appropriate site in the participants' community which provides for comfort and trust. With this in mind, prior to the date of the session, a research site in Zacamil had been identified and selected for use. Unfortunately, on the evening prior to the conduct of the session, it was moved to the El Salvador Sheraton Hotel to comply with the contracting agency's security regulations; the proposed location was declared an off-limits conflict area.

Having to transport participants to a foreign locale had some influence in their openness to talk and their trust of the project. As the "fear" was detected, the moderator had to spend more than the usual time to create an ambiance that provided for an open and free exchange of views and opinions by the participants.

Role of Education:

At first, participants found it difficult to define the role of education in society; perhaps, due to their limited or lack of own schooling. After probing, they said that education serves to teach children the numbers, how to read and write and respect owed to adults and others. "Knowing how to read helps you to find a job," one commented. Participants also estimated that by attending school children can help their parents learn. In other words, a child's schooling is seen as a means for parents learning.

Role of Teachers:

Despite their interest in their children's education, participants felt shortchanged because teachers do not show up to their assignments regularly. In many instances, teachers come to school only two days a week--they said. Worse yet, at times teachers do not show up for one or two weeks straight. They are "maestros faltones" (teachers who miss class a lot). Under such circumstances, participants have to help their children to learn. One mother teaches his son at home with "a book he has" (con un libro que el tiene). However, other mothers in the group are illiterate and unable to help their children as facilitators.

Nevertheless, some participants are satisfied with what teachers/schools offer. They stated that "National Language" ("Idioma Nacional") and "Mathematics" are subjects taught at schools. Additionally, teachers teach "good behavior" ("buenos hábitos"). Other participants, however, feel that their children are not learning because some teachers don't care about education, "they just fill up a blackboard with a lesson and ask students to copy it without due explanation." ("...solamente llenan la pizarra con una lección y ponen a copiar a los alumnos sin darles una explicación"). One of the end results of this practice is that children, many times, "know how to write but not how to read" ("...saben escribir pero no leer").

Another teaching strategy disliked by parents was the practice of assigning teaching to upper grade students. According to participants, it only results in students' missuse of time. "The teacher usually sends another child to teach, then, the children just missuse time" ("La maestra suele mandar un niño a enseñar, entonces, los niños pierden el tiempo").

According to participants, if teachers want to better fulfill their role as educators, they ought to comply with their functions by being punctual, dialoging with students, checking on student progress, gaining the students' respect and recognition, respecting students, getting to know students and explaining lessons well instead of just dictating or writing on the board. Teachers are looked upon as a child's substitute mother ("Las maestras son como una segunda madre").

Participants felt that some of the needed improvement in the teaching-learning process could be obtained by providing teacher training ("capacitacion"). Participants said that some teachers do not know how to differentiate between the educational needs of a 5-years old and those of a 7-years old student. To alleviate this situation, they suggested on-going, in-service training as well as training right after the teachers' graduation.

Throughout the years of their children's schooling, participants have encountered good teachers and good schools. They know when their children have a good teacher, and feel sorry whenever they have to move away from a school where the "good teacher" works.

The Role of School Principals:

According to participants, school principals ("Directores de Escuela") play a major role in teacher support and school administration. However, they perceive a marked difference in performance between former and current principals. Before, directores used to substitute absent teachers, held business sessions, and cared about other school needs. But now, they maintain their offices closed just to study for their own university courses--they said. Participants suggested that many school principals pursue other university degrees.

Reasons for Sending/Not Sending Children to School:

Despite their criticism toward teachers, participants saw schools as the only vehicle to open up their children's economic opportunities. They send their children to school "to better their future" ("para que en un futuro sean mejor"). "I want him to learn how to read and write so that in the future he can be someone (of worth)" ("Quiero que aprenda a leer y escribir para que el día de mañana sea alguien") was one comment. Additionally, schools serve to keep children out of the streets, out of trouble, and away from the wrong crowd ("lejos de la cipotada").

The main reason for not sending a child to school is an economic one. Participants stated that schools charge up to C 40.00 (Cuarenta Colones) for registration ("matricula"). In addition to registration fees, parents must provide a uniform and school materials. Participants felt that ultimately, "the uniform is not the one who is going to study. It is important, but if one does not have (financial) means...?" ("No es el uniforme el que va a estudiar. Es importante, pero si uno no tiene posibilidades...?"). Other registration fees quoted were 15 and 25 Colones.

Parental Responsibility Toward Schools/Education:

Participants thought it was their responsibility not only to send their children to school, but also to send them clean and with all their school materials ("...aseaditos y con todos sus útiles"). In turn, the children's responsibility was to behave well in it. Additionally, parents must provide support to students by helping them do their homework. On this task, mothers and fathers share the responsibility, but, when both are literate, it is the mother who is the responsible one for helping. In cases where there is an older literate sibling, s/he also helps.

Participants said they are readily available whenever schools seek their help. In the past, some of them have served as helpers in a now defunct school lunch program. Now, however, it does not seem as if schools promote many activities involving parents; only from time to time are they asked to help in painting a classroom, painting the blackboard and performing other maintenance tasks. The customary way to bring parents to school is by summoning them via a citatorio. One of the areas they suggested they could help was to look after the children in school. "Two mothers can come to school on a daily basis to look after the children" ("podrian venir dos madres diarias a ver a los niños"). Also, these two mothers could come to school to serve food--they said. At home mothers can also help by checking their child's notebooks and homework and by "obliging them to go to class" ("...obligarlos a ir a clase").

Mothers from Cojutepeque
Topline Report

Participants:

Eleven mothers attended this session. All were residents of Cojutepeque, a commercial center known in El Salvador for the quality home-made sausages ("embutidos") produced. All participants had at least a child attending one of several local schools in a grade from 1 to 6. The most mentioned school was "Escuela Anita Alvarado," the research site.

Some in the group were single mothers while others were married. One was a widow. Those who were heads of household worked for a living, while most of the married ones were housewives and took care of domestic chores at home. Of those who worked, some worked at the local market, just blocks away from the school site where the session took place. One was a nurse. She was very knowledgeable of the surrounding rural areas and of the people living there.

As perceived by their personal conduct and attire, most in the group belonged to a socioeconomic segment which allowed them and their families access to most of the community's goods and services, including schooling.

Context:

The group session took place at "Escuela Anita Alvarado," a well maintained school which has been in operation since the late 50's. Participants were familiar with the school. Some of them had attended it as students during their school years. They said they care for the school and for the education offered there.

The mothers' group took place right after a focus group was conducted with administrators--School principals, Vice-Principals and one Nuclei Director. This might have created some expectations among the mothers who were waiting outside and may have overheard the last agenda items discussed by the administrators. After the introductory remarks, participants were ready to voice their opinions toward the El Salvador's school system as portrayed by the schools attended by their children and the teaching conducted in them.

Perspective on Educational System:

Participants estimate that even though there are enough schools in urban Cojutepeque, schools do not have the resources needed to properly conduct teaching. They feel, for example, that schools are in dire need of teaching materials ("material didáctico" and desks ("pupitres"). It is a national problem

("...es un problema nacional"). To alleviate such limitations, some parents provide school materials; others, however, cannot help for economic reasons which, according to participants, is the product of the country's own economic crisis ("El país está en una crisis económica"). Generally, schools lack paper, pencils, ink and other materials that were provided before.

In their assessment of school performance, participants criticized the schools' lack of discipline and the institution's new Promoción Orientada, the process by which pupils are promoted to the immediate upper grade at the end of the school year irrespective of the grades earned. In their view, if a student does not perform s/he should not pass ("...si no hay rendimiento, que no pase").

The Role of Teachers:

In addition to the resources mentioned above, participants thought of teachers as the principal agents in schooling. According to them, however, the teacher's guiding element, la mística, is now extinct ("la mística del maestro se ha perdido"). This has serious repercussions in what goes on inside a classroom. For instance, "many (teachers) have become lazy" ("muchos (maestros) se han echo haraganes") and do not measure up to the obligations they owe to children. Incidentally, according to participants, teachers use "lack of materials" as one of the excuses for not working. To aggravate the situation, participants charge that the MOE does not pay attention to the teacher anymore ("El Ministerio se ha despreocupado del maestro").

Regular absenteeism, according to participants, also takes a toll on education. For instance, a female teacher takes up to three months leave when she gives birth to a child. They recalled, in such cases, the MOE used to send a substitute teacher, maestro interino, but now, as the Ministry does not have money, maestros interinos are not made available to cover for absent teachers.

According to participants, the low level of performance in teachers is also due, in part, to the abolition of school supervision. In the past, supervisors used to visit schools regularly, not now ("...hay supervisores, pero no salen"). Participants also felt that El Salvador's teacher training is deficient ("La preparación del maestro es deficiente") and that now, right after Bachillerato, ill prepared individuals try to teach, but children do not see in them persons of due respect ("Después del Bachillerato vienen de maestras monas alocadas. El cipote les pierde respeto").

Good teachers still exist--said participants. They are characterized by having control in the classroom, being accessible and gaining the student's confidence. Usually, good teachers show an interest in pupils, are more responsible and están más conscientizados; somewhat, are more aware of educational needs and act upon that knowledge. In contrast, bad teachers teach just to get by ("...para salir del paso") and use teaching as a ladder to pursue other careers ("...usan el magisterio como una escalera para hacer otras carreras").

The Role of Parents:

According to participants, a parent's duty is to send children to school. For some parents, a child's education represents certain economic hardship but, as they want their children to discover a new world ("...descubrir un mundo nuevo"), even with the scarce financial resources available, they send their children to school. Still, a good number of children in the community remain outside schools. Participants estimated that "60% of Cojutepeque's children do not study" ("El 60% de los niños de Cojutepeque no estudia"). Participants judged that the cost of schooling is the chief reason of this phenomenon. They stated that, for example, "there are cooperation (fees) in all schools. In one it is 5 Colones a week per child" ("Hay cooperación en todas las escuelas. En una son 5 Colones a la semana por niño"); that is, in addition to the 40 Colones registration fee charged at the beginning of the school year. Schools do not take a child who does not pay ("Las escuelas no toman a un niño si no paga"). Adding to the cost of schooling are the costs of shoes, clothing and, most important, the cost of the uniform. A child has to wear a uniform to be admitted to school.

Participants suggested parents' orientation as a strategy to help in the education process. They also thought that promoting on-going parent-teacher interaction would help. At present, they said, closing the gap between teachers and parents is necessary.

Another factor cited by mothers as contributing to deficiencies in the system is commercialization. Participants charged that schools have become commercialized (Hay comercialización (en las escuelas)). Evidence of such commercialization are the above mentioned initial colaboración, the cost of uniforms (60 Colones approximately) and the cost of books and other school materials. Before, these costs were partially covered by the government; books and teaching materials were provided, but not anymore. Another before-and-after contrast mentioned was that children used to take their books home to study; now there is only one book for every 5 or 6 children.

Participants strongly suggested that a child's nutrition also plays a very important role in the teaching-learning process. According to them, a child's diet should include milk, vitamins or at least something to eat ("...algo de comer"). Participants recalled when the government used to send a snack to all schools. They associated this refrigerio distribution to the times of U.S. President Kennedy ("Antes, cuando Kennedy, mandaban leche").

Perspectives for Change:

Participants said that the educational system in El Salvador would benefit with the implementation of some changes. They suggested that financial resources, teacher's training and teachers' attitude should merit immediate change. In assessing the possibilities for such changes to occur, a participant cited the work of a rural female teacher who has minimal resources but who is empilada, concentrated and dedicated to making things work. As a result, she has been able to promote educational access and attainment in the community she serves.

Media Education:

When queried about TV and radio education, participants were skeptical of such services. They said that "Years ago there was educational TV but it did not work" ("Hace años habia televisión educativa pero no funcionó"). "Teachers used to set the TV up and leave" ("Los maestros ponian la TV y se salian"). As far as radio education, participants' major concern was the lack of interaction endemic to radio education. They visualized radio education and said that "if the student has a question, the radio cannot answer" ("si el niño tiene una pregunta, el radio no puede contestar"). They acknowledged that there was a radio station teaching campesinos how to read, but it is not functioning anymore for political reasons ("Habla una radiodifusora que enseñaba a leer a los campesinos, pero ya no funciona. Entró pa política").

Focus Group Experience:

The group session lasted for 95 minutes, approximately. Participants left with the idea that something can be done to improve education in El Salvador. They expressed their willingness to cooperate to that end.

MOTHERS
EASTERN REGION
TOPLINE REPORT

Participants:

Nine women participated in the group. All were from San Miguel, La Ciudad de los Garrobos. All were married or else were single mothers with 5, 6, or 7 children each. One woman cared for a grandchild in addition to her own children. The one with 7 children reported that one of her sons lives in New Orleans.

Some of the participants work outside their houses as maids and in other occupations. One was a small business woman and one a secretary.

Context:

The group session took place in one of the classrooms of a local private university. Prior to the group, the women gathered outside the classroom where a recruiter interviewed them to determine their eligibility to participate in the group. Once screened, participants were served a soda to help in the creation of an informal interactive environment where conversation on El Salvador's education would take place.

Role of Teachers/Administrators:

Right after the introductions, participants readily volunteered their views on education. They strongly associated education with teachers and the teachers' actions inside and outside the school. That is why, participants concurred that students "...should respect the teacher in the same manner they respect their mothers" ("...deben respetar a la profesora de la misma manera que respetan a su madre").

Good Teachers/Bad Teachers:

According to participants, teachers' performances vary. One can find good and bad teachers everywhere. A good teacher is an individual who understands, respects and and treats children well. Good teachers assign homework on a daily basis, ask students to investigate and check the students' homework. Additionally, good teachers maintain "...on-going communication with the mother ("...se comunica con la madre").

Bad teachers, on the other hand, use worksheets instead of explaining lessons. This was seen, by participants, as a sign of teachers not wanting to work. The worksheets are used for reading and testing. Participants said that the worksheets are sold.

Some "bad" teachers, according to participants, do not show up to class. Such is the case at "Escuela Ofelia Herrera" where the teacher says she is ill and does not show up. When a teacher does not show up, children are sent home. This, according to participants, should not happen. The school, instead, should have a substitute teacher who can take on the class. According to participants, the schooling problems mentioned above are more pronounced in the rural areas where teachers show up for class irregularly ("En el area rural hay mas problema. Los profesores llegan, no llegan...").

Participants would like to see in teachers a commitment to teaching and control. They would like teachers to instill order in the classroom by sanctioning students who get out of line.

Curricular Program:

Participants suggested that teachers in grades 1 to 6 should teach Religion, Mathematics, Manual Arts, Drawing and how to embroider, hem and put buttons on garments. Most important, though, was the teaching of morals. Other skills of worth mentioned by participants were Calligraphy and Orthography. After participants exhausted this segment of the conversation, the moderator probed for additional practical skills which participants might have had in mind as significant in a child's schooling, but no further comments were made by participants on practical skills to be taught and learned in grades 1 to 6.

Participants said that with the abolition of (corporal) punishment, teachers now respect students more; unfortunately, according to them, the situation, in some cases, has been reversed in such a way that students do not respect teachers.

As far as teacher training is concerned, participants felt that teachers were better prepared in the past. As evidence of this assertion, they cited that before, a student with an eighth grade education could become a teacher. In reference to an earlier comment about the teaching of Modern Mathematics in schools, they stated that in the past, studies in Mathematics were more advanced and said that "today Arithmetic is not existent" ("hoy ya no existe la aritmética").

School principals were seen by participants as mediators between parents and teachers and between teachers and students. Participants said that when a problem arises, if the teacher is unlikely to have a solution, parents go directly to the principal. According to participants, principals should also serve as substitute teachers.

Role of Parents:

Participants stated that education is also a product of parental input. They recalled two instances where parental support of education has been instrumental in securing a piece of land from the municipality for the construction of a school. "Parents have helped school with work" ("Los padres han ayudado a la escuela con trabajo"). But the parents' enthusiasm and work is sometimes curtailed by factors which fall outside their control; for instance, the school they built lacks electricity and water, desks are insufficient and the principal's office is not finished.

However, that type of situation, according to participants, is common in El Salvador and even with some sacrifices, parents' desires are to send their children to school. One of the reasons these mothers work is to send their children to school ("...trabajo para que mis hijas sigan estudiando").

In discussing how parents help in schools, participants recalled that there was high participation by many parents in building "Escuela Santillana." One participant said that her husband used to work in building the school for weeks straight.

But not all parents cooperate, said participants, some are negligent and never go to school to check on their children's attendance and progress. Parents should check, also, children's homework and push them to do it. "We should put our part" ("Nosotros debemos poner de nuestra parte").

Reasons for Not Sending Children to School:

Participants identified some of the reasons why parents do not send their children to school. They said that the main reasons are illness or scarce resources or because they put children to work ("...ponen a los niños a trabajar). On the financial aspect, participants stated that some parents just don't have the money to pay the costs. Such amounts can be up to C 300 (Trecientos Colones) calculated as the sum of the cost of the school uniform, shoes, socks and registration fees.

At present, participants said that the shirt for a uniform could cost up to C 21 (Veintiun Colones) and that if a child does not have a uniform s/he cannot go to school. Nevertheless, participants saw value in a child's uniform. It provides children with an identification ("...el uniforme sirve de identificación"). At the cantón level, however, uniforms are not required said participants.

Satisfaction with the System:

Soon after the participants' discussed the role of teachers, parents and schools their children's education, the moderator asked participants to assess the performance of the El Salvador's education system by giving it a grade between 0 and 10. A variety of scores were recorded. In support of the scores given, those who gave a high score did so basing their assessment on the "good" teachers now serving their children. Of those who gave the education system a low score one said "Everything needs to be repaired" ("Todo necesita repararse"). The average score, they said, was five.

Participants were asked to verbalize some petitions to a supposedly official member of the Ministry of Education. They said that schools were in need of desks because some children have to remain standing during class while others "have to write on the floor" ("...algunos alumnos se quedan parados, otros escriben en el suelo"). Other petitions were for chalk and notebooks.

Children at the Center of the Education Process:

According to participants, parents' interest in their children's education face severe problems. Class sizes of 55 to 60 children, small classrooms of 25-children capacity and the attitude of some teachers do not help in the education of children. As such, many children are flunked every year and their possibilities to get ahead become limited. Students are flunked, mainly, because of not learning how to read and write and because of their low achievement in class ("...los aplazan porque son rudos, no aprenden"); but also, because some teachers have preferred students to whom they teach more in detriment of "the poor student" ("...el que malquiere es el pobrecito").

Books as Tools for Education:

Books were seen by participants as principal instruments in the teaching-learning process. They stated that each child should have his/her own book. They sensed that when books were made available, they were proportioned by the U.S. ("...los libros los mandaron de los Estados Unidos").

Media Education:

When asked about media education, participants perceived some value in TV and radio education, but forewarned that some families do not have electricity ("...pero hay familias que no tienen luz") They also stated that children would be better off with some educational TV programming because, presently, "...all they watch is killings" ("...sólo se dedican a ver de matar"). Participants suggested radio programming based on consejos a los alumnos, pupils' advice. They also suggested programming to teach multiplication tables and radio programs where regular classroom lessons can be reinforced.

FATHERS
EASTERN REGION
TOPLINE REPORT

Participants:

Eight men were screened and recruited to participate in this focus group. All met the qualifying criteria which stated that participants had to have at least one child attending school in any of the grades corresponding at the first two cycles of basic education. All the men were parents of more than one child. One had five children in his family.

Besides the similarities maintained among the men in the group, there were some significant differences which, in the course of the discussion, were manifested. Of these differences, the most salient was the participants' level of schooling. Five participants had little or no schooling, one was a law student, one had a B. A. in Public Administration and one mentioned "university studies" during the screening interview. With this in mind, the moderator tried granting equal discussion time to the less literate. Nevertheless, one of the more schooled tried to dominate the discussion. He seemed to have had his own agenda and tried to push themes related to school promoters ("promotores escolares") and the lack of per-diem for them at all cost ("Los viaticos no salen a tiempo"). He did not succeed.

Another difference detected was that whereas the majority of participants were from urban San Miguel, two of them were from far away cantones in Morazan State. The latter provided the group with views on the problem from a rural areas perspective.

Context:

The group session took place in one of the classrooms of Universidad de Oriente, a private university in downtown San Miguel. It followed the focus group with local mothers.

Education and the Education System:

The opening remarks by one of the participants was "...the education system is fine, but the planning process cannot be executed because of socio-political problems" ("...el sistema educativo está bien, pero por problemas socio-políticos no se puede ejecutar"). This assertion was immediately countered by another participant who said "...the education system has to be independent of any ideological current" ("...el sistema educativo debe ser independiente de cualquier corriente ideológica"). A third participant stated "...the system is not bad, the bad thing is that it is the result of political power" ("...el sistema no es malo, lo malo es que es el resultado de un poder político").

Different from the urban dwellers in the group who tried to conceptualize and analyze the educational problem of El Salvador in a rather academic manner, participants from the rural areas suggested more immediate and practical issues pertaining to education. For instance, they explained that the teacher assigned to their cantón simply moved away from the area leaving no one to replace him. The local school is now without a teacher, and children await for a replacement to no avail ("el maestro se retiró, no conseguimos otro profesor"). The replacement of the teacher was cited by these two participants as a difficult problem because when the teacher left, he did not resign and by not signing resignation papers he is making it impossible for the MOE administration to assign another teacher. Participants agreed that the situation portrayed by these two participants was common to other rural areas. They said "...the Usulután and La Unión cantones are unprotected. The help does not reach them" ("...los cantones de Usulután y a unión están desprotegidos. La ayuda no llega").

Teacher Training:

Participants thought that teacher training in El Salvador was deficient; thus, teachers are ill prepared to execute ("Los maestros están mal preparados para ejecutar"). Because of this, participants claimed that sometimes a number of students leave sixth grade without knowing how to add or multiply ("...salen de sexto y no saben sumar ni multiplicar"). "The addition rules ought to be taught; they help in practical life" ("Las reglas de sumar deben ser enseñadas; ayudan en la vida practica").

The attitude of some teachers was also criticized by participants noting that there is a difference between former and current teachers. Before, teachers would ask a child to memorize a page of text and ask him/her to go before the class to recite the lesson; but not anymore. Participants thought that teachers' attitudes are the result, in part, of the educational reform because before the law changed, teaching would take place in schools ("No se aprende por la Reforma Educativa. Antes sí se enseñaba").

Education:

Participants thought that a teacher's mission was to help children to "...know the socio-political reality" ("...conocer la realidad político-social") and to teach children about El Salvador first because "One has to know first where one is born" ("...conocer primero donde uno nace"). But, participants said, "The students know well the rivers in Honduras and Nicaragua, but they don't know the El Salvador's rivers" ("Los alumnos conocen bien los ríos de Honduras y Nicaragua pero no conocen los ríos de El Salvador").

Good Teachers/Bad Teachers:

Teachers, according to participants, should be punctual and should set a good example to students. They must behave well in and out of school and use proper language. But, most importantly, they said, teachers should have the ability to give their knowledge to students, otherwise, students would be "blocked" ("Deben saber dar sus conocimientos al alumno, por que si no, el alumno queda bloqueado").

Participants said, also, that teachers should provide vocational orientation and should address topics related to human relations, civics, and religion. Another important skill suggested by participants was reasoning. It should be taught and learned in the first two cycles of basic education--they said. Additionally, teachers should prepare class, introduce a new school day welcoming children with an informal conversation and should bring books and games to class.

The teachers' activity was summarized by participants with the phrase "The pupil is the true reflection of the teacher's teaching" ("El alumno es el fiel reflejo de la enseñanza del profesor").

The Role of Parents:

Participants opened this segment of the discussion with "Of what value is a good teacher in the absence of good parents" ("De que sirve un buen profesor si no hay buenos padres"). According to participants, the education phenomenon includes teachers, students, parents and the MOE as principal actors. Parents, according to them, should be responsible for providing school materials and food. One participant commented Barriga llena, corazon contento y mente abierta ("Full stomach, happy heart and open mind").

On the parent participation issue, participants recalled helping to build a school. That school, however, is now insufficient because it houses 1,500 students in two classrooms. In this particular instance, the school authorities have split the students into morning and afternoon sessions.

The Role of the MOE:

In a game-like manner, participants were asked to present some petitions to a MOE official. He was, supposedly, inside the room meeting with them. Some were prompt to call for school expansion while others said that their first priority was having a teacher assigned to their community. During this segment of the discussion, participants brought up the fact that, as they know it, there are many graduated and unemployed teachers who are waiting for a nombramiento--a salaried position.

As far as teacher training, participants suggested that bringing teachers up-to-date in teaching techniques was needed; also, they suggested taking rural teachers to the city to be trained and then return them to the rural areas. But, they emphasized, the people have to be originally from the rural area because then they would dedicate themselves more to the community, "They have love for the community" ("Le tienen amor a la comunidad").

Obstacles Facing Education:

Participants voiced several problems the El Salvador's Education System faces. They, however, differentiated between the urban and rural areas. The latter, according to them, lack infrastructure, teachers and school materials in a greater proportion than the former. Moreover, in the rural areas teachers show up sporadically. This, however, was not harshly criticized because, they said, teachers have their own responsibilities toward their families they leave behind in order to go teaching. In this respect, participants were concerned about the breaking up of the family.

Other problems stem, according to participants, from the conflict El Salvador is living. At times, they said, teachers find themselves between firing squads which precludes them from functioning properly in war zones and cannot give all of their time to working ("...no pueden dar todo su tiempo al trabajo"). The war, according to participants, has also impacted children's minds and one can find students with mental disorders everywhere.

Social and economic problems were also cited by participants as obstacles to the education process. They said that big families of five or more children impede parents to provide them with and education. One participant commented that a neighbor's wife "...had five children and still was pregnant" ("...tenía cinco niños y seguía embarazada"). Additionally, registration fees, monthly fees, school materials and the cost of uniforms make it impossible for some parents to procure schooling for their children. The high rate of unemployment was also cited as an impediment to gathering enough resources needed for supporting a child's education.

Media Education:

Participants saw value in radio and TV education. They stated that it is in the rural area where is needed the most ("El área rural es donde más se necesita").

Mothers, Central Region
Topline Report

Participants:

Eight mothers attended this first of two mothers' groups at "Escuela España" in San Salvador. They stated having from one to five children each, and had at least one child attending a public school in a grade from 1 to 6. Some mentioned performing work outside their homes while others said they were housewives dedicating their time to household chores.

Context:

Escuela España, the site of the session, is a well maintained, all-girls school in the heart of a colonia where the streets are paved and the houses are, for the most part, well built and well kept. The school is adjacent to El Salvador's National University campus.

When the focus group team arrived, many of the students were cleaning the school grounds in preparation for a ceremony celebrating the country's independence day. With the exception of some girls wearing a typical, colorful Salvadoran dress, all others were wearing either the regular or the sports' uniform of the school.

Role of Education:

Before getting into the substance of the theme, participants expressed their opinion toward the educational system in El Salvador. They said it was bad. They estimated that part of the problem was the commercialization of education ("...la educación se ha comercializado"). They did not, however, elaborate on this aspect. Upon probing they mentioned that by commercialization, they referred to the fact that anyone can set up a school. This has led to the proliferation of schools of dubious quality. In support of their characterization of the system as bad, they cited that one can find children in grades fourth or fifth who "...do not know nothing" ("...no saben nada"). The passing of a child to the next grade irrespective of his or her achievement or the Promoción Orientada process contributed, according to participants, to the present underperformance of the system. They stated their preference for keeping a child in a grade instead of passing the student without the appropriate achievement.

Participants thought that a better system could be obtained, partially, by implementing a program teaching concrete things instead of superfluous or worthless, utopic subjects "...cosas

concretas...no cosas utópicas que no sirven para nada"). In addition to suggesting cosas concretas as part of an improved school curriculum, participants thought that moral education was very important.

Role of Teachers:

Participants said that teachers' performance has varied over time; that teachers in the past were better. The difference, according to participants, rests on the fact that teachers in the past were moved by the call, vocación, to teach--not anymore. Participants said that now some enter teaching just to have a job without having the needed vocación (... "se meten de maestros aunque no tengan vocación").

One of the charges participants made against "bad" teachers was that they don't have an interest in children. But then upon further discussion, participants said that the high number of children per class, from 40 to 60, is an impediment for a better teachers' performance. The school density problem is further aggravated, according to participants, by the high number of immigrants from the rural areas pouring into San Salvador. Participants stated that an optimum class size was 25 students per teacher.

Additionally, participants described "bad" teachers as misusers of time and irresponsible. They cited cases where a given teacher writes a lesson on the board for the pupils to copy and then abandons the room to drink coffee. As a result of this practice, participants said that "...children don't even know how to hold a pencil" ("...no saben ni como agarrar un lápiz"). There are cases, they said, of sixth grade students who do not know how to write.

As parents wanting the best for their children, participants said that schools should prepare students, at least, in the arts of reading, writing and counting. And again, they stressed the importance of moral education as a subject by which students can learn life's worth, courtesy and respect.

Finally, the poor attitude and poor performance of some teachers was justified by participants who said that teachers' attitudes and performance is affected by the low pay teachers receive. This fact, according to participants, forces teachers into taking additional jobs to supplement their income. Participants recalled cases where a teacher held up to three teaching positions in a combination of public and private schools.

Parental Role in Education:

Participants identified several areas of possible parental input to schools. However, they said that schools summon their participation, mainly, as financial contributors. Most of the time, they said, schools call upon us asking for money ("...it is always to pull out money" ("...siempre es para sacar dinero"). Another area where parents can participate, they said, was in procuring materials and equipment from organizations to enhance teaching and learning at schools. One participant stated "...one can borrow a movie projector and educational films from organizations" (...uno puede prestar un proyector y películas educativas de organizaciones"). One of the problems parents face is that most of them work and do not have the time to be involved--they said. Although participants were probed on possible parental activity inside the classroom, participants did not make any suggestions for helping teachers in class.

Factors that Keep Children Out of School:

As the theme "why some parents don't send their children to school" was suggested by the moderator, participants' first responses pointed out to the economic factor. They stated that education in El Salvador is not free ("La educación en El Salvador no es gratis"). In support of their statement, participants quoted the annual fee charged at Escuela España as being C 20.00 (Twenty Colones). They added that in addition to this fee, there are other expenses including the cost of uniforms and school supplies. Knowing the potential school expenses, they said, keeps many parents from even attempting to enroll their children in school. Participants insisted, however, that most parents are aware of the benefits of education, they don't want their children to remain illiterate; on the contrary, they want their children to be persons of worth in the future. Education was perceived by participants as the only vehicle providing a societal advancement opportunity.

Satisfaction with the System:

Participants were asked to "grade" the educational system and to support their grading. The range was from 4 to 7. Some of those who gave the educational system a low 4 grade did so because, according to them, "...at least there are schools, otherwise it would be a zero" ("...cuando menos hay escuelas, si no sería un cero"). One participant added "Children are the reflection of the system, I give (it) a four" ("Los niños son el reflejo del sistema, doy un cuatro").

What Can Be Improved:

Participants gave several suggestions to improve the present educational system. They began by making the MOE responsible for a better teachers' preparation and the supplying of schools materials. In further discussions, they also identified schools' maintenance, the provision of furniture, books and janitorial supplies as the MOE's intrinsic responsibilities. They observed that there are several earthquake damaged schools still in need of repairs too.

Not much was said about teachers' preparation content. Nevertheless, participants suggested issues pertaining to new teaching methods including instructional puppetry. In their view, it motivates children to study. Additionally, they felt that a more rounded education included activities outside the classroom and found value in a child's physical education.

Media Education:

Participants spoke against radio and TV education. One of the comments was that many cantones do not have electricity. They also said: "The idea of TV education does not function in the capital city" ("La idea de la televisión educativa no funciona en la capital"). Finally, they stated that "...children are used to watch cartoons on TV, not educational programs" ("...los niños están acostumbrados a ver muñecos en la televisión, no programas educativos"). "It is better to give books to the children" ("Es mejor darles libros a los niños").

The groups session concluded in a friendly atmosphere. All participants expressed their satisfaction to the moderator as they were leaving the room. The session lasted approximately 80 minutes.

Mothers, Central Region
Topline Report

Participants:

Seven mothers participated in this second mothers' group at Escuela España in San Salvador. In the group, some were married and others were single mothers heads of household. All had at least one child attending a public school in a grade from 1 to 6. And all had at least two children but no one had more than five. Some worked outside their homes while others declared labores domesticas, meaning they were housewives. One was a Mathematics teacher at the National University.

Context:

Between sessions, the focus group team had the opportunity to observe the tail end of a ceremony taking place at the school in celebration of El Salvador's independence. The school principal, at the podium, witnessed the exit of the flag carried by proud students in a solemn act. Everyone in the audience had their right hand over their hearts in show of respect for the country's symbol.

As the act ended, some of the girls lined up to visit a classroom where the upper grades' science projects were exhibited. Others just played in the school yard with classmates and friends.

In a short, informal conversation with one of the teachers at that school, the research team learned that there are morning and afternoon sessions. In the morning the school enrollment is 800 students; while in the afternoon, 460 students attend classes. Morning session teachers are 23. Fifteen teachers work in the afternoon.

Perspective on the Educational System:

To begin the discussion the moderator asked participants their opinions on the role of education in society. Participants, however, chose to discuss how badly, in their opinion, the education system was. One said, that education was "bad" all over the country. However, the rest of the group reacted saying that it was only in the rural area where the education was bad. One defender of the system established a comparison between education in El Salvador and education in Mexico. She said that education in El Salvador was better; that her children had gone to school in Mexico and that here they were learning more. No consensus was reached by the group as to whether education was good or bad in El Salvador nor if it was better than in Mexico.

Role of Teachers:

In the same mood shown in discussing education and the educational system, participants discussed the role of teachers. They charged that some teachers are lazy ("haraganes"). "They just write something on the board and leave (the class)" ("Sólo escriben algo en la pizarra y se van"). Again, some participants pointed out differences between the urban and rural areas saying that such teacher behavior is exhibited more in the country side.

The discussion was then focussed on the rural areas, the cantones. There, according to participants, teachers' negligence is such that they show up only one or two days a week. "They are lazy people who don't want to work" ("Son gente haragán who don't want to work") was the most serious statement made against teachers.

Teachers' Preparation

Teachers were perceived as ill-prepared to teach properly. One of the participants had the benefit of dealing with teachers on a first hand basis. She is a teachers' trainer at the National University where a Mathematics program has been instituted to address teachers' deficiencies in Mathematics. She commented that some of her students do not know Mathematics at all.

The teachers' poor training, according to participants, results in their inability to follow and teach the school program properly. Some participants sensed that when teachers do not understand the concepts embedded in the curriculum they just transcribe, word by word, the lesson's content as spelled out in the teachers manual and ask students to copy it. Then, they said, children ask for help at home because the teacher is unable to resolve their inquiries. Education, therefore, suffers.

After all their criticism toward teachers and the teachers' poor training, participants suggested a teacher training program for the purpose of alleviating all the anomalies. According to them, such training should be instituted by the MOE.

Role of Parents:

Participants stated that parents also have a responsibility toward their children's education. They saw a parents' role not only as supporters of school activities, but also as educators. They said that "...parents should teach their children good manners and respect" ("...los padres deben enseñar a los niños buenas maneras y a respetar"). As far as activities inside the school is concerned, participants thought that forming parents' associations, directivas, would help schools to promote

activities. They felt that the level of parent participation is presently low. The chief reason for the low parent participation level was their working responsibilities. Nevertheless, participants felt that parents should help schools in thinking what is needed and how the needs can be fulfilled. They were willing to participate in parents' associations so the school would function better ("...formar una directiva para que la escuela funcione mejor").

According to participants, there is also a type of irresponsible parent who just drop their children at school and keep on going in their cars without ever helping in the school. One in the group mentioned that, in contrast, her husband and herself went to "...San Andrés to buy 100 small trees for the school children to plant" ("...fuimos a San Andrés a comprar cien arbolitos para que los niños los plantaran"). "Hay que sacrificar" ("One has to sacrifice")--she said.

Other irresponsible parents, participants said, do not provide the economic support needed for their families. In some of those cases, they said, children end up as street vendors or take on singing in public buses to earn a living. There are six- and seven-years old children that are already engaged in that type of activity--they said.

Factors that Keep Children Out of School:

"The family's economic situation" (La situación económica de la familia") was the most mentioned factor affecting children's ability to enroll in school. They stated that since uniforms are a requirement and since many families cannot afford to purchase a uniform, many children are kept outside the schools. They noted, however, that uniforms are not required in the rural areas. In addition to the uniform, participants said that other educational costs include the cost of clothing, shoes, school materials and transportation. Under such circumstances, many parents opt for sending their children to work instead--they said. Participants said that, at times, many of the children left out of school become drug addicts and substance abusers such as "glue sniffers" ("huelepegas").

Media Education:

Participants felt that radio and TV education had only a slim possibility of succeeding in El Salvador. They stated that not everybody has a radio and said, jokingly, that TV education would succeed only if they were given a TV set free. They further stated that currently there is a literacy program being broadcast but no one listens to it because they have to go to work. About this particular literacy campaign participants said they didn't even know who sponsors it. "Instead of radio and TV (education), why don't they give food?" ("En lugar de radio y television, por que no dan alimentos?")--one asked.

Role of the MOE:

Participants were asked to think that a MOE representative was in front of them listening to their needs for school system improvements. They immediately asked for school buildings and good teachers, in that order. Other petitions were for food and an honest and reliable goods distribution system. When they talked about food for school children, they recalled a now defunct program sponsored by the U.S. Under that program, participants claimed receiving a cookie and wheat ("...nos daban una galleta y trigo").

Focus Group Experience:

After the group session ended, the university professor stayed a bit longer to say that the Mathematics program at the university suffers financial and other constraints. She said that one of the reasons for the financial limitations is that the authorities associate university educational programs with political activism; therefore, it is hard to obtain sponsorship for needed educational programs attached to the National University.

APPENDIX B:

Screeners

APENDICE B: CUESTIONARIO PARA LA SELECCION DE ADMINISTRADORES
 PROYECTO GRUPOS DE ENFOQUE, EL SALVADOR

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____
 Dirección: _____ Entrevistador: _____
 Teléfono: _____ Región: _____

Hola, me llamo _____. Estoy aquí para pedirle su participación en una discusión informal sobre educación. Puedo hacerle unas preguntas para determinar su elegibilidad?

Se le precalificará al administrador de acuerdo a los anales del Ministerio de Educación en los siguientes aspectos:

- Es ADMINISTRADOR de educación básica en escuela pública ..Si
- Es - Director de escuela de básica 1
 - Director de núcleo 2
 - Trabaja tiempo completo.....1

1a. Cuántas escuelas supervisa?

- menos de 5 1
- 5 - 9 2
- 10 - 19 3
- 20 - 29 4
- 30 - 39 5
- mas de 40 6

1b. Cuántos maestros supervisa?

- menos de 5 1
- 5 - 9 2
- 10 - 19 3
- 20 - 29 4
- 30 - 39 5
- mas de 40 6

2. Con qué ciclos está familiarizado Ud.?

- Primero 1
- Segundo 2
- Tercero 3

3. Dónde trabaja Usted?

_____ Nombre de escuela	_____ subregion
_____ region	

4. Hasta qué grado estudió Usted?

- Bachillerato pedagógico 1
- Normal 2
- Voc. técnico 3
- Universitario 4
- Otro (Especifique: _____).. 5

Vamos a llevar a cabo una discusión informal el _____
y nos gustaría que Usted participara. La sesión empezará a las
_____ y durará aproximadamente una hora y media a
dos horas. Se realizará en _____. Por favor
llegue unos 10 a 15 minutos antes de la hora que empezará la
sesión.

ASIGNAR

Grupo: _____
Fecha: _____
Hora: _____
Lugar: _____

APENDICE B: CUESTIONARIO PARA LA SELECCION DE DOCENTES PARTICIPANTES

PROYECTO GRUPOS DE ENFOQUE, EL SALVADOR

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____
 Dirección: _____ Entrevistador: _____
 Teléfono: _____ Región: _____

Hola, me llamo _____. Estoy aqui para pedirle su participación en una discusión informal sobre educación. Puedo hacerle unas preguntas para determinar su elegibilidad?

Se le precalificará al docente de acuerdo a los anales del Ministerio de Educación en los siguientes aspectos:

- Es maestro de educación básica en escuela pública..... 1
- Enseña en cualquier grado de 1o. a) 6o..... 1
- Enseña a tiempo completo.....1

1. Cuántos estudiantes tiene en su clase o clases?

- 10 - 19 1
- 20 - 29 2
- 30 - 39 3
- mas de 40 4

2. Qué grado enseña?

- Preparatoria 0
- 1o 1
- 2o 2
- 3o 3
- 4o 4
- 5o 5
- 6o 6

(Se necesita una buena distribución por grado.)

3. Dónde enseña Usted?

Nombre de escuela

region

4. Hasta que grado estudió Usted?

Bachillerato pedagógico	1
Normal	2
Voc. técnico	3
Universitario	4
Otro (Especifique: _____) ..	5

Vamos a llevar a cabo una discusión informal el _____ y nos gustaría que Usted participara. La sesión empezará a las _____ y durará aproximadamente una hora y media a dos horas. Se realizará en _____. Por favor llegue unos 10 a 15 minutos antes de la hora que empezará la sesión.

ASIGNAR

Grupo: _____

Fecha: _____

Hora: _____

Lugar: _____

APPENDIX B: CUESTIONARIO PARA LA SELECCION DE
PADRES DE FAMILIA PARTICIPANTES

PROYECTO GRUPOS DE ENFOQUE, EL SALVADOR

NOMBRE: _____ FECHA: _____
DIRECCION: _____ ENTREVISTADOR: _____
_____ REGION: _____

Buenos días (tardes). Soy _____ y vengo a invitarle a una charla informal sobre la educación. Me permite hacerle unas preguntas?

ESTABLRECER SI LA PERSONA ENTREVISTADA ES PADRE O MADRE DE FAMILIA.

Padre.....1
Madre.....2
Otro (terminar).....3

1. Tiene Ud. hijos que van a la escuela
--primero a sexto grado? Si (continuar)...1
No (terminar)...2

2. Cuantos de ellos van a la escuela?
1.....1
2.....2
3.....3
Mas de 3.....4

3. A que grado van?
1-3.....1
3-6.....2
Solo Bachillerato (terminar).....3
Solo Vocacional/Tecnico (terminar).....4

(SE NECESITA UNA BUENA DISTRIBUCION POR GRADO)

4. A que escuela(s) va(n) su(s) hijo(a)(s)? _____

(SE NECESITA UNA BUENA REPRESENTACION DE ESCUELAS, AREA RURAL)

5. Es una escuela publica o privada? Publica (continuar).....1
Privada (terminar).....2

6. Hasta que grado de estudios llego Ud.? No escolaridad....1
1-3.....2
4-6.....3
Bachillerato.....4
Vocacional/Tecnico.....5
Universitario.....6

7. Cuantas personas en total viven en su casa? 1-3.....1
4-6.....2
7-9.....3
10 o mas.....4

8. Que trabajo u oficio desempeña Ud.?

Vamos a llevar a cabo una reunion informal el _____

a las _____ en _____.

La sesion durara entre una hora y media y dos horas. Nos gustaria que Ud. participara. Por favor llegue unos diez o quince minutos antes de la hora indicada.

ASIGNAR:

GRUPO: _____

FECHA: _____

HORA: _____

LUGAR: _____

APPENDIX C:
Moderators' Guides

PADRES

Guía del moderador

I. Introducción

A. Bienvenida, descripción de la sesión, propósito, y mecánica

Nada de ventas, nada de política o religión; se desean opiniones sinceras de todos ya sean que estén de acuerdo o desacuerdo; tal vez habrá interrupciones ya que hay mucho material que cubrir.

B. Presentación de los participantes

Nombre, edad, número de miembros de la familia, lugar de origen, ocupación y número de hijos en la escuela y grado

II. Perspectivas sobre la educación

Decirles a los participantes que ya no es necesario hablar uno por uno, sino quien quiera dar su opinión, que siga adelante. Queremos oír de todos. Uno a la vez.

A. El rol de la educación

1. Cuál es la función de la educación en la sociedad?
2. Qué se enseña/aprende en la escuela? Para qué?
3. Qué es lo que las escuelas deben ofrecer? Qué más es importante?
4. Qué habilidades útiles se deben enseñar en los primeros dos ciclos de educación básica (preparatoria a 6o grado)?
5. Qué deben aprender los niños en casa? Hay una relación entre lo que se aprende en la escuela y lo que se aprende en casa? Debe haber?

Sondear cualquier relación que se mencione.

B. Los proveedores de la educación

1. Cuál es la función del maestro en la escuela?

Sondear todas las funciones mencionadas.

2. Cuando se dice que un maestro es un buen maestro?

Profundizar sobre: Interacción con los alumnos, participación en la comunidad, interés en el bienestar de los alumnos, Nivel de capacitación, Conocimiento de metodologías de enseñanza-aprendizaje, Dedicación y mistica, Asistencia en el aula, Otros.

3. Cual es la función de los directores y las autoridades del M. de E.?

4. Cómo desarrollan esas funciones?

Organización, Planificación, Creación de plazas, Capacitación de supervisores, Capacitación de docentes, Construcción y mantenimiento de escuelas, Supervisión de maestros, y Desarrollo curricular.

C. El rol de los padres y sus responsabilidades

1. Por qué mandan los padres a sus hijos a la escuela, particularmente en los primeros dos ciclos de educación básica?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con más frecuencia.

2. Cuáles son algunas razones para no mandarlos a la escuela, particularmente en los primeros dos ciclos?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con más frecuencia.

3. Qué factores influyen para que el niño asista o no asista a la escuela?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con más frecuencia.

4. Qué motiva a Uds. a participar en actividades de la escuela? Qué limita la participación?

D. Satisfacción con el sistema educativo

1. Qué piensan del sistema educativo actual?

Poner atención a toda reacción que conduzca a explorar diferentes aspectos y el grado de satisfacción con éstos. Escribir en pizarra y discutir.

2. Hay algun(os) aspecto(s) que necesiten cambio? Cuáles y porqué? Qué se necesita cambiar ya?

Tratar de establecer prioridades.

E. Costo de la educación

1. Cuánto cuesta mandar un niño a la escuela privada? A una pública? Hay costos no monetarios? Cómo qué? Por qué dicen eso?
2. Cómo ven Uds. ese costo? Cómo se pudiera obtener financiamiento para suplir ese costo? Cómo se pudiera bajar el costo?
3. Bajarían los costos contribuyendo con tiempo a la escuela? Qué límites hay para la contribución de tiempo? Es realista esperar que padres contribuyan tiempo? Hay algunas tareas que se prestan más a que Uds. participen con su tiempo? Cuáles?

III. Conclusión y agradecimiento

Agradecerles la participación de todos e indicarles como recibirán su gratificación.

ADMINISTRADORES

Guía de moderador

I. Introducción

A. Bienvenida, descripción de la sesión, propósito y mecánica

Nada de ventas, nada de política o religión; se desean opiniones sinceras de todos ya sean que estén de acuerdo o desacuerdo; tal vez habra interrupciones ya que hay mucho material que cubrir.

B. Presentación de los participantes

Nombre, edad, puesto que ocupa, tiempo de estar como administrador, número de personas que supervisa, y número de escuelas bajo su cargo.

II. Perspectivas sobre la educación

Decirles a los participantes que ya no es necesario hablar uno por uno, sino quien quiera dar su opinión, que siga adelante. Queremos oír de todos. Favor de expresarse uno a la vez.

A. El rol de la educación

- 1.Cuál se la función de la educación en la sociedad?
2. Qué es lo que las escuelas deben ofrecer? Qué más es importante?
3. Qué habilidades útiles deben ser enseñadas en la educación básica (Centrar la discusión sobre los primeros dos ciclos).
4. Qué deben aprender los niños en casa?
5. Hay un relación entre lo que se aprende en la escuela y lo que se aprende en casa? Debe haber?

B. Los proveedores de la educación

1. Cuáles son las responsabilidades de un director? y las de un director de nucleo?
- 2.Cuál es la función del maestro?

3. Cuando se puede decir que un maestro es un buen maestro?

Profundizar sobre: Interracción con los alumnos, participación en la comunidad, interés en el bienestar de los alumnos, nivel de capacitación, asistencia en el aula, otros.

4. Qué opinan de la preparación que se les da a los maestros nuevos, es decir a los que se han recibido en los últimos cinco años?

5.Cuál es la función de las autoridades del M.de E.?

6. Cómo desarrollan esas funciones?

Profundizar sobre: Organización, Planificación, Creación de plazas, Construcción y mantenimiento de escuelas, Interacción con los docentes, Supervisión de maestros, Desarrollo curricular, y Otros.

C. El rol de los padres y sus responsabilidades

1. Por qué mandan los padres a sus hijos a la escuela particularmente en los primeros dos ciclos de educación básica (preparatoria al 6o grado)?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con más frecuencia.

2. Por qué no mandan los padres a sus hijos a la escuela particularmente en los primeros dos ciclos de educación básica?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con más frecuencia.

3. Qué tipo de actividades proveen las escuelas?
Participan Uds.? Por qué si/no?

4. Hay actividades que les gustaría que la escuela pusiera a su disposición? Cómo cuáles?

5. Hay algo que les invita/los motiva a participar en actividades de la escuela? Hay algo que les limita su participación?

D. Satisfacción con el sistema educativo

1. Qué piensan del sistema educativo actual?

Poner atención a toda reacción que conduzca a explorar diferentes aspectos y el grado de satisfacción con éstos? (Escribir en pizarra y discutirlos).

2. Hay algun(os) aspecto(s) que necesiten cambio? Qué necesitan cambiar ya?

Tratar de obtener prioridades.

E. Costo de la educación

1. Cuánto cuesta mandar a un niño a la escuela privada? Y a una pública? Hay costos no monetarios? Cuáles?
2. Cómo calculan el costo? Cómo obtienen el dinero necesario para cubrir ese costo? Habrá otras fuentes u opciones para cubrir esos costos?
3. Vale la pena la inversión? Por qué si/no?

III. Conclusion y cierre

Agradecerles la participación e informarles como recibirán su gratificación.

MAESTROS/DOCENTES

Guía del moderador

I. Introducción

A. Bienvenida, descripción de la sesión, propósito, y mecánica

Nada de ventas, nada de política o religión; se desean opiniones sinceras de todos ya sean que estén de acuerdo o desacuerdo; tal vez habrá interrupciones ya que hay mucho material que cubrir.

B. Presentación de los participantes

Nombre, edad, puesto que ocupa, tiempo de fungir como docente/maestro, tiempo de trabajar en el mismo sitio, número de aulas/alumnos a su cargo y grados que enseña.

II. Perspectivas sobre la educación

Decirles a los participantes que ya no es necesario hablar uno por uno, sino quien quiera dar su opinión, que siga adelante. Queremos oír de todos. Uno a la vez.

A. El rol de la educación

1. Cuál es la función de la educación en la sociedad?

2. Qué se enseña/aprende en la escuela? Para qué?

Sondear objetivos curriculares.

3. Qué es lo que las escuelas deben ofrecer? Qué más es importante?

4. Qué habilidades útiles se deben enseñar en los primeros dos ciclos de educación básica (preparatoria a 6o grado)?

5. Qué deben aprender los niños en casa? Hay una relación entre lo que se aprende en la escuela y lo que se aprende en casa? Debe haber?

Sondear cualquier relación que se mencione.

B. Los proveedores de la educación

1. Cuál es la función del maestro en la escuela

Sondear todas las funciones mencionadas.

2. Como funciona el maestro/docente en el aula?

Sondear métodos de enseñanza (tradicional y actualizada)
Otro, pedir que se describa un día típico.

3. Cuando se dice que un maestro es un buen maestro?

Profundizar sobre: Interacción con los alumnos,
participación en la comunidad, interés en el bienestar de
los alumnos, Nivel de capacitación, Conocimiento de
metodologías de enseñanza-aprendizaje, Dedicación y mistica,
Asistencia en el aula, Otros.

4. Suponer que va a llegar un representante del M. de E.
Pedir a los participantes que expongan sus
preocupaciones en relación a los siguientes puntos.

Organización, Planificación, Creación de plazas,
Capacitación de supervisores, Capacitación de docentes,
Construcción y mantenimiento de escuelas, Supervisión de
maestros, y Desarrollo curricular.

5. Como deciden Uds. quien repetirá el grado y quien no?
En que basan sus criterios?

6. Hay actividades educativas que se pueden utilizar para
hacer la educación de los niños práctica o relevante al
ambiente del hogar? Es importante que la educación
sea práctica y/o relevante a la situación de casa?
Como se podría realizar esto?

C. El rol de los padres y sus responsabilidades

1. Por que mandan los padres a sus hijos a la escuela,
particularmente en los primeros dos ciclos de educación
básica?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con
más frecuencia.

2. Cuales son algunas razones para no mandarlos a la
escuela, particularmente en los primeros dos ciclos?
Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con
más frecuencia.

3. Que factores influyen para que el niño asista o no
asista a la escuela?

Sondear razones y profundizar sobre aquellas mencionadas con
más frecuencia.

4. Que motiva a los padres a participar en actividades de
la escuela? Que limita la participación?

D. Satisfacción con el sistema educativo

1. Qué piensan del sistema educativo actual?

Poner atención a toda reacción que conduzca a explorar diferentes aspectos y el grado de satisfacción con éstos. Escribir en pizarra y discutir.

2. Hay algun(os) aspecto(s) que necesite(n) cambio? Cuáles y porqué? Qué se necesita cambiar ya?

Tratar de establecer prioridades.

E. La eficacia en la enseñanza

1. .Cómo describirían Uds. el nivel de eficacia actual?
Por qué dicen eso?
2. Cómo se podría mejorar la eficacia de la educación?

III. Conclusión y agradecimiento

Agradecerles la participación de todos e indicarles como recibirán su gratificación.

APPENDIX D:
Notes on a Site Visit

1/16

APPENDIX D

Notes on a Site Visit

Sunday, September 3, 1989

1:30PM

We've just toured the Zacamil, Mejicanos and other marginal areas of San Salvador. We've been driven by the mercado where people are busily scurrying up and down the street so purposefully.

Coming back to Colonia _____ . Stopped by the road to ask how to get to the school where the roof can be seen from across the vacant lot. A couple is cuddling by the entrance to a tent set up on the dirt spot where three roads come together. They watch as a crew works in the vacant lot dismantling a carnival ride. The woman points up the road and says to veer to the right and we'll get to the school.

Following directions, we find the school and park the car to walk around the grounds. A big sign indicates that this is Escuela Joaquin Rodezno. We walk down an embankment toward a series of classrooms. Adjacent to the classrooms, a Champa has been set up except that this one has several tables under cover and a jukebox. A cigarette poster moves with as the breeze blows through the "restaurant" area. Another couple is cuddling in between the tables.

We walk around the school building noting the holes in the walls of the temporary structure. In parts, wooden walls have been replaced by particle board that is in a bad state. Whole sections of some walls are missing. We walk in one classroom. There is writing on the blackboard - a chemistry lesson. The light fixtures in the ceiling simply have bare wires hanging from them. The light switch by the door is in the same state.

We walk past the bathrooms to the other two school buildings. Some bathrooms appear unusable - broken comodes; no doors. The first classroom has maybe five desks. Several have puddles of water on the chairs. Looking up, I note the large holes in the ceiling.

We continue on. Three individuals are walking past the other side of the same building about 100 feet from us. They sit at a hillside and being rolling cigarettes.

We meet with a youngster about 7 or 8. He is taking markers he has found in a classroom and writing on his hand to see if there is ink left in them. This is his school, he told us. He is in

second grade and lives in the area. He tells us that he likes school and attends the afternoon session. When we ask for the name of the school, he answers somewhat insolently, "Joaquin Rodezno. Didn't you notice the sign?". Sometimes it gets too hot in the building and the kids act up, he adds. When they turn on the juke box, he tells us, one kid usually starts to dance and is joined by others. The teachers get irritated but can't do anything cause that boy won't listen. He is one reason, the boy tells us, that he doesn't like school.

We ask about the large holes in the wall facing the paved street. He looks up and, pointing to a series of smaller holes cutting across the wall, tells us that those are from the last shoot-out with the police. Time to leave!

As we leave the building I detect a strange odor. It was not tobacco those three males were smoking.

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