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**Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training: A  
Summit of the Americas Initiative**

**Central American Assessment  
Phase II**

**Summary of Findings**

**The Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS)  
Activity**

**Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00  
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## PREFACE

The Basic Education and Policy Support Activity (BEPS), a new five-year initiative sponsored by USAID's Center for Human Capacity Development, is designed to improve the quality, effectiveness, and access to formal and non-formal basic education. As an IQC contract type, BEPS operates through both core funds and Mission buy-ins to provide both short- and long-term assistance to Missions and Regional Bureaus.

BEPS focuses on several important program areas: basic education; educational policy analysis and reform; restorative and additive educational work in countries in crisis (presence and non-presence); and the alleviation of abusive child labor. Services to be provided include policy appraisals and assessments, training and institutional strengthening, and the design and implementation of pilot projects, feasibility studies, applied research studies, seminars/workshops, and evaluations. Under BEPS, USAID also will compile and disseminate results, lessons learned, and other generalizable information through electronic networks, training workshops, national conferences, quarterly and annual reports, publications, and other vehicles.

One of the buy-ins for the BEPS Activity is the *Improved Human Resource Policies Task Order*, a task order funded by LAC/RSD-EHR that provides technical assistance in basic education to USAID's Latin America and Caribbean Region. Helping to launch President George Bush's Centers of Excellence in Teacher Training Initiative is one of the subtasks under that task order.

**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>BEPS</b>	<b>Basic Education Policy Support</b>
<b>CA</b>	<b>Central America</b>
<b>CETT</b>	<b>Center for Excellence in Teacher Training</b>
<b>FEPADE</b>	<b>Fundacion Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo (El Salvador)</b>
<b>ILCE</b>	<b>Instituto Latinoamericano para la Comunicacion Educativa (Mexico)</b>
<b>INCAE</b>	<b>Instituto Centroamericano de Administracion de Empresas (Costa Rica/Nicaragua)</b>
<b>INTEC</b>	<b>Instituto Tecnologico de Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)</b>
<b>LAC</b>	<b>Latin America/Caribbean region</b>
<b>OD</b>	<b>Organizational Development</b>
<b>PUCMM</b>	<b>Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra (Dominican Republic)</b>
<b>SOW</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>
<b>TT</b>	<b>Teacher Training</b>
<b>UPN</b>	<b>Universidad Pedagogica Nacional (Honduras)</b>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>
<b>UVG</b>	<b>Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (Guatemala)</b>

## **PHASE II Central America Institutional Assessment Summary of Findings**

### **Introduction**

This briefing paper summarizes the preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Phase II Central America institutional assessment conducted by BEPS during the period of January 12-29, 2002 across eight institutions within the countries of Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

The eight institutions, and corresponding six countries were selected by the Phase I BEPS assessment team as having the highest, and most appropriate levels, of institutional capacity to serve as either (a) a lead, managing institution for the proposed Central American Center of Excellence in Teacher Training (CA/CETT), or (b) a key, supporting institution with demonstrated excellence in one or more of the key components of the CA/CETT. As such, the Phase II visit built upon the foundations of recommendations and conclusions of Phase I.

The Phase I Assessment not only provided recommendations for potential viable institutions to form the nucleus of the CA/CETT initiative, but additionally provided a general framework for the Phase II in-depth institutional assessment. Phase I posited the following tentative findings, to be tested in Phase II:

- No one single institution in the region has the capacity across the full range of required qualities and expertise to host the CA/CETT by itself. As such, the CA/CETT should consider pursuit of a model based upon an integrated consortium of institutions fulfilling key roles and responsibilities.
- The region possesses a wide array of resources that should be considered for incorporation into the CA/CETT. Such resources include reading experts, teachers unions, public and private institutions of education delivering pre-service and in-service teacher training, universities with high-technology facilities and/or demonstrated capacities in innovative distance education strategies and techniques, etc.
- Teacher training quality is inadequate. In general, both pre-service and in-service teachers and school administrators are in need of strengthening skills and methodologies in reading instruction. Any training delivered should provide appropriate follow-up for future training activities.

- The numerous education reform programs in the region have brought along some significant and positive changes. However, some key issues are still unresolved such as overcrowded classes, lack of materials, high dropout rates, lack of testing programs, etc.

The Phase I CA/CETT assessment findings have been complemented by additional feedback from USAID/LAC, the CETT Consultative Committee and BEPS staff. This cumulative reservoir of information formed the foundation for development of the Phase II SOW (See Annex A). The goals of this Phase II institutional assessment were to:

- expand and systematize information on the institutions recommended in the Phase I assessment report in terms of their capacities to serve as hosts or contribute as counterparts on the CETT, and
- propose and evaluate models for how the CETT is to be organized. The information provided in this Phase II assessment is intended to facilitate the design of the Central America CETT.

### **Assessment Methodology**

The Phase II team consisted of an Organizational Development specialist and a Teacher Training specialist. The OD specialist assessed organizational capabilities, as interpreted by the BEPS team in consultation with USAID, which included the following nine areas:

- Capacity to team successfully,
- Correspondence of mission and values,
- Institutional talent and relative strength of expertise,
- Commitment of senior managers,
- Administrative/ financial capability,
- Absorptive capacity (non-financial organizational capabilities),
- Human resource base,
- Broad-based institutional support, and
- Potential institutional impact.

Similarly, the TT specialist undertook the Phase II assessment with a focus on the following key areas:

- Reading instruction expertise,
- Teacher training,
- Diagnostic and performance assessment,
- Research,
- Distance learning and ICT applications, and
- Country educational environment.

For the purpose of collecting data, both opportunistically and systematically, the consultants utilized a survey methodology for structured interviews and took advantage of additional time to explore related topics not covered in the questioning.

*Focus of work by consultants*

The Phase I team identified the following eight target institutions for follow-up investigation by the Phase II assessment team:

- FEPADE (Fundacion Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo), El Salvador
- UPN (Universidad Pedagogica Nacional), Honduras
- UVG (Universidad del Valle de Guatemala), Guatemala
- INTEC (Instituto Tecnologico de Santo Domingo), Dominican Republic
- INCAE (Instituto Centroamericano de Administracion de Empresas), Costa Rica/Nicaragua
- ILCE (Instituto Latinoamericano para la Comunicacion Educativa), Mexico
- Fundacion Omar Dengo, Costa Rica
- PUCMM (Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra), Dominican Republic

The Phase II team, consisting of one Teacher Training specialist and one Organizational Development expert, visited the above selected Central American institutions. In an effort to produce meaningful data and corresponding recommendations to be presented in Miami at the headquarters of the Cisneros Group on February 6-8, 2002, it was decided to condense the visits into approximately 1.5 days per institution. The intensity of the schedule also reflects the desire that reports from each region of Latin America lead to a memorandum ready for signing at the annual Summit of the Americas in April of 2002.

It is obvious to the rigorous researcher that it is not possible to gain access to and retrieve fully authoritative, verifiable data covering a wide range of issues in such a short visit. However, the BEPS assessment team, through advanced planning, did the best job possible to gain access to the appropriate information and sources of data, including documents and people. In some isolated cases, there was participant observation.

### *Central American Challenges*

BEPS is acutely aware that regional and national pride have presented unique challenges in the past to initiating truly regional initiatives broadly supported by ministers of education in each Central American country, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. The Consultative Committee, at its November 7-8 meeting, emphasized its concern that the Central American CETT would be, in fact, located in a Central American country or countries which experience acute deficiencies in student reading capacity and in teacher instruction of reading. The Phase I assessment report recommended a network approach as a viable strategic pathway toward Central American CETT development. As such, the Phase II team proceeded to visit Central American countries identified in the Phase I assessment, and entertained strategic development options largely identified by two primary strategies.

1. The first consideration is of a CETT model that relies upon a network within which multiple institutions might be considered for particular roles based on demonstrated expertise and regional recommendations for that expertise as identified by consultants and validated in interviews in that country and additional countries. It is important to note that the Phase II assessment team went to visit the countries with an open mind about particular area(s) of expertise each institution possessed.
2. The second strategic alternative is to consider that one or two institutions might distinguish themselves by having a critical mass of expertise across a majority of skill areas deemed essential for CETT development. As such, the team also sought to identify in their visits whether such institutional capabilities actually existed.

Given the previous explanation of the methodology, target population, and additional considerations, the assessment team proceeded to visit eight institutions during the period January 12-29, 2002. The assessment team returned Tuesday evening, January 28, 2002 and conducted a de-briefing with USAID/LAC-EHR. Based upon these discussions and the findings, the assessment team began to organize data and generate preliminary recommendations.

### **Preliminary Findings**

The assessment team attempted to organize and analyze the data as it unfolded during the brief, intensive period of the Phase II assessment. Although some tentative analysis and resulting hypotheses evolved, it was not possible until the end of the assessment trip to step back and begin the process of analyzing results in a macro and micro context. The following are preliminary findings based on the consultants' best judgment and instincts.

#### *Organizational Development*

The OD specialist looked at elements of organizational soundness identified as critical for CETT, including, but not limited to, financial structure, personnel, existing regional outreach and possibilities of expansion, as well as available material and physical resources to support residential and distance learning. The OD consultant reviewed qualitative data and was able to identify some notable trends that arise (See also Annex B: Institutional Profiles):

- UPN ranks highly in teaching preparedness; however managerial capacity to utilize and integrate this expertise into the curriculum is deficient.
- FEPADE's expertise in developing and managing USAID and multi-lateral contracts that are focused on educational development is outstanding.
- UPN has superior, current, high-tech equipment and capacity for potential utilization in Internet-based distance education.
- ILCE in Mexico and INCAE in Costa Rica provide excellent, although cost-intensive, organizational and technical resources, which may be brought to bear in CETT in well-targeted, selected roles and interventions. INCAE's particular strengths are related to private-sector collaboration, as well as region-wide credibility in provision of business education and assorted short-term technical assistance. By contrast, ILCE has tremendous, demonstrated capacity and expertise in research, development and provision of long-distance primary education via virtual technology, videos and films to remote/marginal populations throughout Mexico and thirteen countries of Latin America.

#### *Teacher Training*

The TT consultant looked at a complex set of skills essential to developing and sustaining solid reading instruction skills in pre-service teacher training programs and maintaining continual quality improvement in sustainable, in-service training.

From the technical perspective, some preliminary findings include (See also Annex B):

- The Dominican Republic has teachers and institutions that represent excellence in reading instruction. Such resources would be of value within any CETT construction and should be optimized.

- UPN in Honduras has extensive teacher training experience and is the only institution regionally where the majority of the students are enrolled in the teacher training program. It is of note, although, that the teacher training emphasis at UPN is not on reading instruction.
- UPN also has a tremendous reservoir of expertise in diagnostic and performance assessment.
- UPN has exceptional educational research capabilities and both depth and breadth of faculty.

### *Preliminary Integrated Findings*

1. The Phase II team affirmed the Phase I team's findings that no one institution possesses the range of skill sets and recognized credibility to serve as the Central American CETT.
2. It appears that different institutions distinguish themselves in pockets of excellence with capabilities that could be brought to bear in developing and implementing the Central American CETT.
3. In order for the CETT to be successfully utilized and accessed by all countries in the Central American region, meaningful consideration should be given to creating opportunities for leadership, innovation, and collaboration across all aspects of program design and implementation. The spirit of such a collaboration could yield potentially valuable results which affirm and support the notion of developing a regionally based sustainable CETT initiative beyond the five years of U.S. government funding.
4. However, a couple of institutions did, in fact, evidence sufficient strength and capabilities in multiple, although not all, CETT-required areas should a single or dual institution model be considered for implementation if that model proves the most cost-efficient and qualitatively effective path to pursue.

### **Recommendations**

To the fullest extent possible, the CETT should seek to promote a win-win situation in which each institution perceives its value in potential leadership. Where institutions are affirmed and overcome insular biases, they will be opened to the common needs, resources, and collective pool of ideas in the region that can help strengthen each country. These recommendations attempt to explore modes of delivery of teacher training services that enable institutions and experts to work as a team across borders. For example, the distance learning capabilities of ILCE would become a conduit for delivery of INTEC's expertise in reading instruction across the region. Institutions will need a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability for this model to work, as roles and responsibilities evolve always optimizing the contributions of the collection of talents to beneficiaries and stakeholders.

- The CETT should provide leadership in the development of a strong technical program that can be delivered to the countries, at the same time offering an

opportunity to other institutions to learn in the process and strengthen their capabilities.

- Because there is no one institution that could provide all the capacities needed for the CETT, Phase II Team recommends a combination of institutions to work as leaders. This group of institutions would be headed by a coordinating lead institution, with other institutions providing technical competence in key areas of expertise.
- The preliminary analysis suggests three institutions to manage and perform all key project outputs. These institutions are:
  1. FEPADE as the coordinating lead institution, which would provide managerial and administrative expertise
  2. UPN as a lead institution, which would focus on teacher training, as well as diagnostic and performance assessment
  3. PUCMM and INTEC as lead institutions, which would manage a network of reading instruction experts region-wide
- These lead institutions would work with country-level institutions in a bi-directional manner so as to assure effective delivery to the target populations.
- In order to strengthen the model, there are certain temporary roles for facilitator institutions. These facilitators provide access and credibility to the public and private sectors in the region.
  1. INCAE would play a role as a network facilitator. The institution has experience in the win-win network management model with a successful track record. Following the achievement of a steady state level of performance, INCAE could begin to build the private-sector model and strategy with FEPADE. Perhaps one year out the level of effort would build to a peak and then fall off as FEPADE becomes independent in performing this function.
  2. ILCE would play a technical facilitator role, providing technical assistance to the other institutions in supporting appropriate technology choices, purchases and technology update, as well as producing educational videos, CD ROMS and radio.
- Multiple environmental characteristics support the idea of launching the CETT using an incubation strategy. The CETT concept seems to value the idea of starting small and building the model with care so as to achieve success.