

PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT
SCHOOL REFURBISHMENT PROJECT
Project No. 515-0194.01

April 27, 1987 - January 31, 1994

I. SUMMARY:

On April 27, 1987, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between USAID/Costa Rica, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) and the Peace Corps of Costa Rica, for a total amount of \$50,000,000 colones, to finance for 24 months the School Refurbishment Project, aimed at assisting rural communities in upgrading the quality of education through physical improvement of their primary schools. Funds for this Project came from the Economic Stabilization and Recovery IV Project, No. 515-0194A. The Project was managed primarily as a USAID activity, implemented with Peace Corps Volunteer assistance and coordinated with the Ministry of Public Education.

The original Illustrative Financial Plan of the School Refurbishment Project authorized up to \$768,000 to finance per diem and travel costs for the Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to the Project. On July 16, 1987, a separate "Subsidiary Activity Agreement" was signed between USAID/Costa Rica and the Peace Corps of Costa Rica to regulate the use of these funds and to define the role and responsibilities of the Peace Corps Volunteers.

The original Memorandum of Understanding was amended several times to extend the Project Assistance Completion Date through January 31, 1994 and to increase by \$70,000,000 colones the total amount of funds authorized for the Project, to a final revised total budget of \$120,000,000 colones.

2. PROJECT STATUS VS. PLANNED OUTPUTS:

Planned EOPS:

I. Improve the structures of more than 800 rural schools.

- During the life of the Project, 817 sub-projects were approved, providing financial support to the physical improvement of equal number of rural schools. 815 (99.8%) of these sub-projects were completed, the other 2 could not be completed before the Project's PACD because the GOCR entities that had promised to contribute construction materials failed to do so on time. However, these sub-projects had also been finished by May 31, 1994, four months after the Project's PACD.

2. Benefit 50,000 students of primary schools in rural areas of Costa Rica, where teachers are assigned to overcrowded or inadequate physical facilities.

- Over 55,000 children attending small primary schools in the most needy rural Costa Rican communities benefitted from the physical improvement of their schools.

3. Contributions from the recipient communities are at least equal to the Project's donation.

- All recipient communities contributed land, labor, wood, fuel, design costs, tile floors, chain link fences, construction tools, etc. Their contributions were always equal to the donation received from the SRP and, in at least 75% of the cases, were worth more than the amount received.

3. PLANNED VS. ACTUAL INPUTS: Inputs were provided as planned.

4. END OF PROJECT STATUS:

As indicated in Section 2, "Project Status vs. Planned Outputs", by the Project Assistance Completion Date, the Project had met or exceeded all of its goals.

5. PROGRESS TOWARDS PLANNED PURPOSE:

Section 2 above, indicates that the Project surpassed its targets in most cases.

6. POST PROJECT MONITORING REQUIREMENTS:

None.

7. LESSONS LEARNED:

- The main lesson learned from the experience is that the overall success of the sub-projects depended mainly on the community's level of organization and management capability.
- The poorer, the smaller and the more remote the beneficiary community was, the the greater the impact was, since the community did not have access to other sources of support.
- It was desirable and necessary for the sub-projects to be coordinated with other public and private institutions, but the latter were not directly responsible for their implementation and maintenance. The communities were at all times in charge of developing, and managing the sub-projects, and that was one of the main reasons for the success of the School Refurbishment Project.
- The close partnership between the Mission's office in charge of the School Refurbishment Project and the Peace Corps and, especially, the work done by the volunteers involved in this Project, were key elements to ensure its integrity and success.