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EXCELENCIA Quarterly Report
July 1, 2007 – September 30, 2007



Submitted by:

American Institutes for Research

With:

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

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

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

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

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Associates: Academy for Educational Development (AED)
Save the Children Federation USA

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ACRONYMS

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AIR	American Institutes for Research
APA	Learn, Practice, Apply (Aprendo, Practico, Aplico)
BASE	Basic Education and Training Program II
COP	Chief of Party
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
EXCELENCIA	Expansion of the Excellence Centers in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA (Learn, Practice and Apply) Methodology
MINED	Ministry of Education
PRONICASS	Nicaraguan Support to the Social Sector Program
SO	Strategic Objective
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
RAAN	Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic
RAAS	Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic
EIB	Bilingual Intercultural Education
FADCANIC	Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this quarter, the EXCELENCIA/USAID project has successfully continued its expansion strategy, incorporating 147 new schools into the network. As a part of its expansion strategy, EXCELENCIA/USAID signed agreements with other organizations such as CARE and Banco UNO, and is working in coordination with the Vicariate of Bluefields so that schools served by these organizations will apply the project's educational approach and progressively get incorporated into the network.

The successful application of the project's model school approach has raised international interest. As a result, during this quarter the Ministry of Education (MINED) selected a EXCELENCIA/USAID mentor school to showcase the active learning approach to representatives from ministries of education from Central American countries, affording them the opportunity to see the APA methodology in operation. In addition, a delegation from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Equatorial Guinea visited several of the project's mentor schools seeking to observe first-hand the application of the APA methodology as well as other components that achieve quality student learning and parental participation.

USAID has approved the provision of increased funding to the project for extending its model school approach to 300 privately managed schools serving poor rural communities, including indigenous communities in the autonomous regions on the Caribbean Coast. This new Result 4 will be achieved by partnering with NGOs.

USAID also approved funding for EXCELENCIA/USAID to continue supporting the MINED in the National Consultation for the validation of a new curriculum. A team of project and MINED technical staff are supporting consultation forums and training events at the national and regional levels. MINED has publicly stated its satisfaction with the support provided by USAID through the project. In addition, the project's representatives continue to actively participate in the Curricular Transformation and Teacher Development Commissions with the goal of supporting the official adoption of the new primary education curriculum and its integration into the country's educational system.

The two project expansions increased the award amount from \$11,500,000 to \$15,094,943.

The expansion activities of the APA methodology at schools on the Caribbean Coast have been seriously affected by Hurricane Felix, which damaged 56 out of 66 schools served by EXCELENCIA/USAID. In spite of these difficulties, this region's network schools have reopened their classes at different sites, including churches and private homes. FADCANIC and EXCELENCIA are preparing plans offering alternatives to cope with the destruction in infrastructure that happened in those schools and to aid the psychological recovery of their teachers and students.

IBE materials in the RAAS for third and fourth grades in multi-grade primary education math and language have been developed. FADCANIC expects to start the validation process during the next school year in the school sample agreed upon in their proposal. The IBE material production in the RAAN has experienced some delays due to the impact of Hurricane Felix on the region. Alternatives for their timely completion are

being sought so that they can also be validated during the next school year. Extending this activity to fifth and sixth grade primary multi-grade schools is envisaged through funding in the two new project expansions.

For its 2007 Annual study (Result 3 – Research Studies) EXCELENCIA has been developing standards-based third grade Mathematics and Reading assessments that are aligned to the new curriculum with its emphasis on competencies. A small pilot to test instructions, timing and logistics was held in September. It will be followed by full pilot testing next quarter, the data of which will be used as baseline. In addition, formative tests will be developed for first grade students within the framework of the recent project expansion. This will allow teachers to receive feedback on students' performance during the school year (as opposed to only at the end of the school year, when no remedial actions for that year are possible anymore).

The Save the Children Federation USA has continued applying its preschool-to-primary education transition model in its sample of schools. Save the Children has also developed special training for teachers and parents participating in their study. The document titled “Successful Transition to First Grade: A Key Factor for Early Childhood Development”, was published and distributed.

The second issue of the EXCELENCIA/USAID information bulletin was published.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

I. Result Number 1: Expansion of the network of EXCELENCIA schools that apply the APA Methodology

A) School Network Expansion

During the third quarter of 2007, the EXCELENCIA/USAID team incorporated a total of 147 new schools into the network, resulting in a total of 1,705 school centers. This represents an additional 1,065 schools over the number of schools received at the beginning of the project (640). The project started the year 2006 with a presence in 144 municipalities, and until this quarter has expanded to 149 municipalities, covering 97% of the total number of municipalities in the country.

Table 1: Schools served by EXCELENCIA/USAID by quarter and category

Schools Served by EXCELENCIA by Quarter and Category							
	February 2006	June 2006	September 2006	December 2006	March 2007	June 2007	September 2007
Mentor Schools	112	184	184	190	232	232	232
Satellite Schools	528	526	749	930	899	1327	1473
TOTAL	640	710	933	1,120	1,131	1,559	1,705

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID Project, September 2007.

Table 2 shows the distribution of current EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools by modality and department, as of September 2007.

Table 2: Schools served by EXCELENCIA/USAID by modality and status

Department	School Type				Status		
	Multi-grade	Multi-grade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Mentor Schools	Satellite schools	Total
Department	Multi-grade	Bilingual Multi-grade	Regular	Bilingual Regular	Satellite	Mentor	Total
Boaco	55		18		65	8	73
Carazo	56		23		68	11	79
Chinandega	71		48		100	19	119
Chontales	112		23		122	13	135
Estelí	37		29		58	8	66
Granada	52		30		67	15	82
Jinotega	87		28		105	10	115
León	87		35		99	23	122
Madriz	68		18		75	11	86
Managua	44		79		98	25	123
Masaya	38		44		70	12	82
Matagalpa	103		47		135	15	150
Nueva Segovia	81		25		94	12	106
RAAN	16	28	10	19	60	13	73
RAAS	74	4	33	11	107	15	122
Río San Juan	46		17		55	8	63
Rivas	71		38		95	14	109
TOTAL	1098	32	545	30	1,473	232	1,705

Source: EXCELENCIA Project, September 2007

The graph below tracks the progress of the expansion of the EXCELENCIA network under Result 1. As can be observed from the graph EXCELENCIA is well on target of reaching its expansion goal towards the end of the project.

Graph 1: Quarterly progress chart - Number of schools served by EXCELENCIA

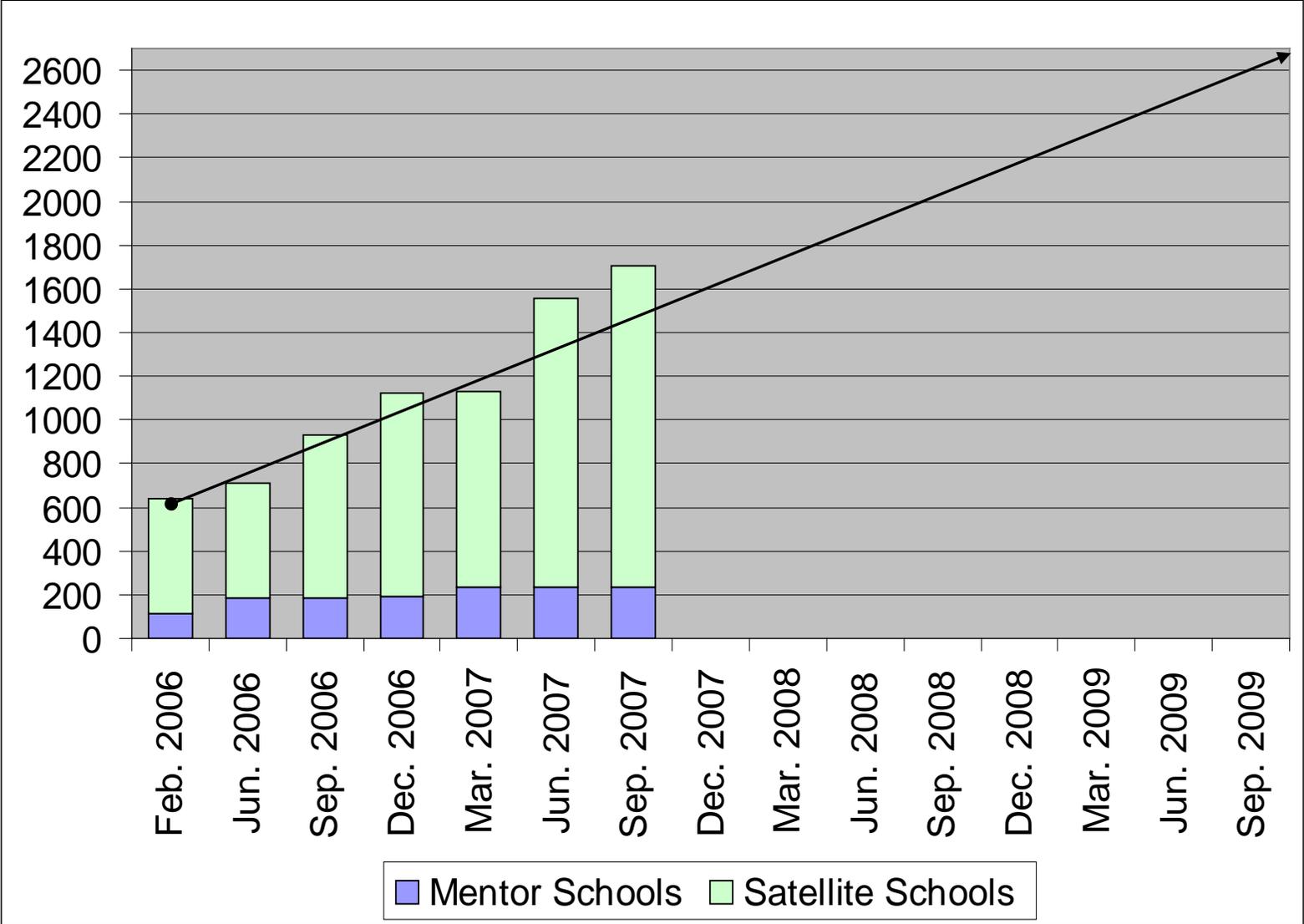


Table 3 shows the progress made in the coverage of EXCELENCIA/USAID, taking as a reference the data updated by the MINED Statistics Directorate. According to that data, by the end of the third quarter of 2007 EXCELENCIA/USAID served 20% of the schools and 35% of all primary education students enrolled in the country. In addition, a total of 35% of primary education teachers work in EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools.

Table 3: The EXCELENCIA/USAID Expansion Status as of September 2007

Coverage by Municipality	
Number of municipalities in the country	153
Number of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA in 2006	144
% of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA in 2006	95%
Number of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA as of September 2007	149
% of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA as of September 2007	97%
Coverage by schools	
Number of primary education schools (MINED 2007)	8,516
Number of schools served by EXCELENCIA as of September 2007	1,705
% of primary schools served by EXCELENCIA as of September 2007	20%
Coverage by student enrollment	
Total of initial enrollment in primary education 2007	950,035
Total of enrollment at EXCELENCIA school as of September 2007	334,909
% of enrollment at EXCELENCIA schools as of September 2007	35%
Coverage by teacher	
Total number of primary education teachers 2006**	29,030
Number of teachers at EXCELENCIA schools as of September 2007	10,237
% of Teachers at EXCELENCIA schools as of September 2007	35%

* MINED preliminary data. ** MINED did not conduct a teacher census in 2007, therefore the project used the 2006 teacher census.

Source: MINED Statistics Directorate and EXCELENCIA. All records as of September 2007 National Teacher totals (MINED figures from 2006). EXCELENCIA updates all data with the MINED Statistics Directorate on a continual basis.

In order to achieve its expansion goals, EXCELENCIA/USAID facilitators and MINED departmental and municipal advisors completed a total of 2,217 technical assistance and follow-up visits to schools this quarter.

This quarter witnessed a change in departmental and municipal advisors. To ease the transition, out-going advisors accompanied the new advisors during technical assistance and mentoring visits. During the visits, the pedagogical advisors were able to verify that network school teachers apply the knowledge they acquire through project-sponsored training events.

Another achievement highlighted during the visits was the application of first and second grade reading-writing projects self-adapted by teachers in all schools this quarter. In addition, the classroom group work component is now being applied in a more systematic manner.

The small reduction in the number of visits as compared to last quarter is due to the fact that September is a month of national holidays known as the “Mes de la Patria.” During this month, pedagogical advisors spend most of their time developing activities related to this theme.

The following table demonstrates how the 2,217 technical assistance and mentoring visits were distributed by department:

Table 4: Number of technical assistance and mentoring visits by department

Department	Number of Visits
Masaya	138
Granada	129
Rivas	159
Carazo	137
RAAS	73
Chontales	248
Río San Juan	88
Managua	105
Madriz	153
Esteli, Madriz and Nueva Segovia	404
Chinandega	168
León	225
Jinotega	127
Matagalpa	164
TOTAL	2,217

As of September 2007, a total of 10,237 (8,209 female and 2,028 male) teachers work at EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools. This represents 35% of the total number of teachers registered by the MINED at primary education schools in the country.

Table 5 shows the distribution of those teachers by gender and department:

Table 5: Number of teachers at EXCELENCIA/USAID schools as of September 2007

Department	FEMALE	MALE	Total
Boaco	329	45	374
Carazo	371	81	452
Chinandega	764	122	866
Chontales	422	59	481
Estelí	380	90	470
Granada	464	106	570
Jinotega	509	114	623
León	596	64	660
Madriz	292	97	389
Managua	1003	284	1,287
Masaya	595	136	731
Matagalpa	707	202	909
Nueva Segovia	441	68	509
RAAN	266	177	443
RAAS	382	244	626
Río San Juan	218	56	274
Rivas	470	83	553
TOTAL	8,209	2,028	10,237

B. Training

At the different training events organized by EXCELENCIA/USAID at both the national and local levels during the third quarter of 2007, a total of 19,382 people (15,515 females and 3,867 males) participated. Out of all participants in training provided by the project, a total of 18,441 (15,016 females and 3,425 males) participated in training events in the Pacific Coast region and 941 (499 females and 442 males) participated in training carried out in the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions. In addition, 115 individuals were trained under the Save the Children Federation USA subcontract this quarter.

In this quarter, training courses in the Pacific Coast region have been held through the following events:

a) Technical meetings:

During this quarter three technical meetings with project network mentor school pedagogical advisors and principals and/or assistant principals were carried out. During these technical meetings, led by project facilitators, advisors and school principals exchanged experiences and lessons learned, planned the training for their respective regions, and developed joint strategies to support the network expansion.

b) Reinforcing workshops at mentor schools:

Mentor schools held reinforcing workshops for teacher development. These workshops are planned according to the training and development needs at each mentor school. Among the topics covered this period are the following: intra-family violence; learning evaluation functions and stages, oral and written expression, physical education, map reading, use and management of the math basket, APA methodology planning strategies, and other.

c) Workshops for first and second grade teachers:

The main content of these workshops is related to early reading and writing learning through the “Significant Expressions” method used by the project.

d) Workshops for third and fourth grade teachers:

The content of these workshops was teaching social studies and natural sciences within the APA methodology framework. Teachers were shown how to make numerous scientific experiments with their students using very simple materials.

e) Workshops for fifth and sixth grade teachers:

These workshops were developed with advice from specialists in mathematics, social studies, Spanish, and natural sciences. MINED departmental and municipal authorities participated and were very satisfied with the quality.

f) Experience sharing among schools:

During this quarter, mentor schools from the municipalities of Somoto and Yalagüina shared experiences through observation visits made by their representatives. During these visits, school teachers share ideas and experiences about the practice of the EXCELENCIA/USAID approach with their colleagues from other schools.

Tables 6, 9, and 10 show this quarter's training activities by gender and duration in both geographical areas.

Table 6: Jul-Sep.2007 training activities by gender and duration in the Pacific Coast regions

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS April - June 2007 by Event, Gender, and Duration			
Event	Female	Male	TOTAL
Second workshop for third and fourth grade teachers	3,572	800	4,372
Second workshop for fifth and sixth grade teachers	2,804	887	3,691
Fourth regional technical meeting with school principals and pedagogical advisors	266	112	378
Fifth regional technical meeting with school principals and pedagogical advisors	215	90	305
Workshops on teacher development reinforcement at mentor schools	3,831	818	4,649
Second workshop for first and second grade teachers	4,061	579	4,640
Sixth regional technical meeting with school principals and pedagogical advisors	247	134	381
Experience sharing between Somoto and Yalaguina Mentor Schools	20	5	25
Total	15,016	3,425	18,441

Source: EXCELENCIA /USAID Project September 2007

The total amount of people trained by EXCELENCIA/USAID to date is 66,532.

C) Expansion Activities in the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions (FADCANIC)

Expansion Activities:

Through FADCANIC, EXCELENCIA/USAID currently serves a total of 104 schools in the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions. Table 7 shows the number of schools served per region and school type.

Table 7: Schools served by EXCELENCIA in the North and South Atlantic Autonomous Regions.

Region	School Type		TOTAL
	Mentor	Satellite	
RAAN	12	53	65
RAAS	10	29	39
TOTAL	22	82	104

In the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions, FADCANIC continued implementing an expansion strategy for the APA methodology in schools, and trained teachers and students on the different components. Bilingual material preparation for the new curriculum application on primary multi-grade for third and fourth grade has progressed smoothly.

In order to reinforce the APA methodology application in the schools under its coverage, FADCANIC facilitators carried out 70 visits this quarter. During these visits,

they provided technical assistance to 255 teachers in the classroom. Table 8 shows the number of visits and teachers served by region.

Table 8: Number of visits and teachers assisted during visits

Region	Visits	Schools	Teachers		
			Female	Male	TOTAL
RAAS	33	33	56	50	106
RAAN	37	37	78	71	149
TOTAL	70	70	134	121	255

Training Activities:

The tables below show the trainings developed and conducted by FADCANIC during this quarter:

Table 9: Training Events in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS)

Name of Event	Female	Male	Total
Workshop on the APA methodology for mentor schools principals and teachers	12	46	58
Total	12	46	58

Table No. 10. Training Events in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN)

Name of Event	Female	Male	Total
Workshop on organization and operation of student councils	133	124	257
Workshop on the APA methodology for mentor schools principals and teachers	171	108	279
Workshops on Parent Committees organization and operation	168	146	314
Workshop on use and management of math baskets	15	18	33
Total	487	396	883

IBE Materials Production

IBE specialists have continued language and mathematics material production for third and fourth grade multi-grade schools. The status of this activity is shown in Annex1.

Resource Center Inauguration

The Resource Center in “El Hogar” mentor school was inaugurated on August 10th in Bluefields. The Ambassador of the United States as well as regional authorities were present.

The effects of Hurricane Felix on RAAN

Hurricane Felix had a devastating effect on schools in RAAN. A total of 56 EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools in the RAAN suffered varying levels of damage; some of them making it impossible to continue instruction in the affected school building (see Annex 2). Not only the infrastructure was severely damaged, but books and educational materials were also lost, as well as school records. Several of these schools have tried to continue with their classes in other locations, such as

churches and private homes. Moreover, the fact that teachers in the region also had their property damaged by the hurricane has affected their capacity to work. EXCELENCIA/USAID has requested FADCANIC to submit a proposal refocusing their actions in the region to help restart school activities at network schools as soon as possible. Meanwhile, AIR has submitted a letter informing USAID about the damage inflicted by Hurricane Felix to project schools and the adverse impact this will have on the achievement of the goals set forth for the RAAN. FADCANIC and EXCELENCIA are also preparing alternative plans taking into account the destruction of infrastructure in the schools and the need for psychological recovery of teachers and students.

D) Achievements under Result 1

EXCELENCIA/USAID has been able to get support from the new regional and local authorities. The project has been able to show new regional and local authorities the advantages its approach offers in support of the MINED policy to provide quality education. In some regions, for example, previous pedagogical advisors showed the project to new advisors, bringing them to mentor schools and showing them first hand the advantages of the methodology proposed by the project.

The project has incorporated 147 new schools into the network during this quarter. Despite the challenges of making the project known to new MINED authorities in the regions and schools and training them on its components, the facilitators' work made it possible to significantly increase the number of schools reached.

The project significantly increased the amount of people trained. During this third quarter, EXCELENCIA/USAID was able to reach 19,382 people (18,441 in the Pacific Coast and 941 in the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions) with its national and local training.

EXCELENCIA/USAID has generated interest outside Nicaragua. MINED selected the mentor school of Yalagüina to show representatives from Ministries of Education of several Central American countries the achievements of the EXCELENCIA/USAID approach in teaching and learning. In addition, a delegation from the Ministry of Education of Equatorial Guinea interested on applying a similar approach in their country visited several mentor schools of the project.

II. Result No. 2. New Curriculum Based on Competencies for Primary Education that includes Bilingual Intercultural Education validated and incorporated into the National Educational System

A) Validation Process Expansion

USAID formally approved an expansion of project funding in order to respond to the MINED request for technical assistance and funding for the New Curriculum National Consultation activities. This is the first time in the history of Nicaragua that an educational curriculum is being presented for consultation on the national level with the

participation of teachers, parents, authorities and civil society. EXCELENCIA/USAID is playing a critical role in this process. In consultation with MINED technical staff, EXCELENCIA/USAID prepared a detailed plan for national and regional forums as well as a follow-up plan for school observation visits. EXCELENCIA/USAID's close coordination and comprehensive work is strengthening MINED's technical and institutional capacity for this type of actions and the Ministry's new authorities have expressed their satisfaction and appreciation regarding this matter.

The project's Technical Coordinator is a member of the National Curriculum Commission where she represents not only the project's position but also contributes its experiences. The project's Senior Technical Advisor is a member of the National Commission for Teacher Development where he helps develop strategies for teacher training on the new competency approach.

B) MINED Recognizes Contribution of EXCELENCIA/USAID to Primary Education Curriculum Transformation and Consultation

MINED authorities have expressed to USAID on several occasions their satisfaction of the support EXCELENCIA/USAID is providing to the new primary education curriculum transformation and consultation process.

C) Production of Materials for Inter-Cultural Bilingual Education

Production of IBE materials is almost complete and materials are expected to be ready for validation at the beginning of the next school year (See Annex 1). Production of materials for the RAAN has experienced some delays which were aggravated by Hurricane Felix's impact. FADCANIC will submit a plan for meeting the goals of this activity.

Under the allocation of funds to support the National Curriculum Consultation and Result 4, USAID also granted new resources for the production of IBE materials in reading and mathematics for fifth and sixth grade in multi-grade primary education. FADCANIC will start work on those new activities soon.

D) Achievements under Result 2

EXCELENCIA/USAID is supporting the MINED in the National Consultation on the New Educational Curriculum. This support is highly appreciated and has been formally and publicly recognized by authorities. The coordinated efforts of EXCELENCIA/USAID and the MINED technical staff are building greatly-needed institutional capacity to continue with this type of activity in the future.

The project is actively participating on the Teacher Development Commission, in which members are analyzing how to train teachers within the framework of the new competency approach.

Material preparation for IBE in third and fourth grade language and math is almost complete, and new funds for fifth grade material production were granted (as well as for grade six under funds for the new Result 4).

III. Result 3: Longitudinal Studies and Additional Research to Assess Project Impact and Field Studies to Set up Effective Channels to Improve Transition to Primary Education

A) 2007 Annual Study, Student Assessment

It was agreed with the authorities at the MINED that the 2007 Annual Study will focus on establishing a baseline for assessing students' academic performance within the new curriculum framework. The assessment will not only give the project an objective monitoring tool on educational quality, but also provide the MINED with an instrument to evaluate some of the competencies contained in the new curriculum..

It was also agreed that the 2007 Annual Study will assess the academic performance Reading and Mathematics of third grade students from a sample of schools that have participated in the validation process. At the same time, the study will also analyze factors associated with students' academic performance, through teacher and principal questionnaires.

After having conducted a rigorous item revision process on the more than 400 items produced in workshops during the previous quarter and after carrying out a small field test in September, four Mathematics and four Reading test forms of 36 items each will be piloted in the fourth quarter in 62 multi-grade and regular schools involving approximately 3300 students.

The 2007 annual study will provide important data on the Mathematic and Reading skills of students in third grade in Nicaragua and will serve as a baseline for future test administrations. The test development process has helped to build local capacity in assessment activities.

During this quarter, the 2006 First Annual Study on the Mentor School Program was printed out and it is being distributed to the network schools and among the national educational community.

B) Follow-up to Data Processing and Consolidation for Project Indicators

Monitoring of the project's indicators has continued through the processing and consolidation of information from field activities during this quarter. Currently, the project has a database on the number of network schools and their enrollment, as well as data on participation in trainings carried out by the Project. This database is frequently updated.

C) Transition to Primary Education Experiences Study (Save the Children)

Following are the main Save the Children activities within the education for transition framework this quarter:

- Creation of four community preschools, extending coverage to 30 children;
- Training workshops for teaching staff, parents and the community;
- Pedagogical assistance in the classroom to pre-school teachers as well as 1st and second grade teachers;
- The *Multi-grade Schools: An Alternative for Children who move from Pre-school to First Grade* module was completed and edited.

- Training workshops for teaching staff, parents and the community

Workshops for teachers:

Six training workshops for the teaching staff of four experimental schools with participation of new MINED pedagogical advisors have been carried out.

Table 11: Workshops carried out by Save the Children

Workshops carried out by Save the Children		
Topic	Participants	Number
Educational games at school	Pre-school, first and second grade teachers, school principals, parents, community leaders and new pedagogical advisors.	42
Pedagogical assistance on education for transition	New MINED delegates and pedagogical advisors and school principals	42
Evaluation of planning process for second quarter actions	Teachers from the four experimental schools	31
TOTAL		115

Topics have been well received by both male and female teachers who have also complimented the methodology as very practical. Some effects can already be seen: These include changes in classroom environments, the use of learning corners, the promotion of game techniques to encourage learning, and an increase in school retention as well as teachers' pedagogical capacity.

Workshops for parents:

Four assemblies with parents and community leaders have also been carried out in communities where school absenteeism represents a serious problem. Attendance at and promotion of these assemblies are being monitored in collaboration with school principals in order to motivate parents to participate. Parents' assemblies have had a 95% attendance rate.

- Classroom Pedagogical Assistance:

During this quarter, 36 classroom pedagogical assistance visits have been carried out, with a focus on first grade classrooms. The success achieved in the transformation of educational practices in the classroom is due mainly to this activity.

- Modules

The *Multi-Grade Schools: an Alternative for Children Moving from Pre-School to First Grade*” from the three-module *Education for Transition with Excellence* series has been completed and edited. In addition, the child’s active role module is underway. The report “Successful Transition to First Grade, a Key Factor for Early Childhood Development” was published and distributed this quarter.

D) Achievements under Result 3

The 2007 Annual Study on student performance has progressed significantly. Items for the baseline study that will assess student performance in reading and mathematics have been developed and test forms are being prepared for testing in a sample of 65 schools from the 150 schools which are participating in the new curriculum validation in the Pacific Coast region.

Project indicators are kept up-to-date. Project indicator updating and the careful process ensuring reliability is the product of an up-to-date database where data is entered every quarter. Information exchanges with the MINED’s data system are carried out to ensure better data verification for both EXCELENCIA/USAID and MINED.

The Save the Children Study on Transition to Primary Education was published and distributed. The study “Successful Transition to First Grade, a Key Factor for Early Childhood Development” was published and distributed. Save the Children is now testing a transition model in six pilot schools to offer it to different institutions.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER

- **Activities under the Result 4 project expansion will start.** The project will soon start working on activities related to the new Result 4, which extends the EXCELENCIA/USAID approach to 300 privately managed schools serving poor rural communities, including indigenous communities in the autonomous regions on the Caribbean Coast. The new Result 4 will be achieved by partnering with NGOs. Activities will start with organizing the office, recruiting and hiring staff, and developing terms of reference and requests for proposals for potential partner NGOs.
- **Expansion actions will continue as planned.** Schools will continue being incorporated into the EXCELENCIA/USAID network and next year actions to achieve expected goals will be planned. Two new facilitators will be incorporated into the Result 1 team. Next quarter we expect to the media more actively in promoting the project's approach.
- **Support to the National Curriculum Consultation** will continue. We will continue supporting the MINED with help in conducting consultation forums and work on the validation of new curriculum materials.
- **The 2007 Annual Study will continue as planned.** Data gathered from applying the third grade reading and mathematics assessments at a selected school sample will be analyzed. With the resulting data the project will have a baseline on third grade student performance in the above mentioned subject areas and grade level.
- **Actions for the Caribbean Coast will be re-planned.** The Atlantic Coast Autonomous Regions plans, especially those for the RAAN, will be reviewed with FADACNIC, so that they can be adapted to the new circumstances brought about by Hurricane Felix.
- **The third edition of the EXCELENCIA/USAID bulletin will be published and distributed.** This issue will address topics related to resource centers as tools to improve educational quality in schools and the progress on the approach for early reading and writing learning through the "significant expressions" project.

SUCCESS STORIES

EXCELENCIA ATTRACTS INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

The Ministry of Education in Nicaragua (MINED) chose the EXCELENCIA/USAID experience to showcase it as a model of education quality to different representatives from the ministries of education of several Central American countries. Eighteen representatives from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Panama recently visited Nicaragua as a part of a project funded by the Organization of American States (OAS) that seeks to train teachers on different models of quality education.

MINED selected the Miguel Larreynaga Mentor School in Yalagüina to show the visitors first hand how the EXCELENCIA/USAID approach is applied in the classroom as well as to witness its effectiveness on teaching quality. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Marlene Valdivia, Secretary General of MINED and an educator. The Central American visitors showed their satisfaction with the experience. Ms. Valdivia also publicly acknowledged the Ministry's satisfaction and appreciation for having the EXCELENCIA/USAID Project as a part of the technical assistance provided to the MINED in support of its national educational objectives.

One teacher from Panama, Elisa de Pinzon, commented, "It is amazing to see how a change in classroom management, just how having students working in groups, can mean and achieve such a great progress in their learning of the topics they study."

"This visit has changed my life." This is what Doña Delfina Ayevegue, Director of Primary Education from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports of Equatorial Guinea said when leaving Nicaragua after her recent visit. Doña Delfina and Don Anselmo Ondó, Secretary General of the Ministry of Education from Equatorial Guinea, visited Nicaragua to learn first hand the successful experience of EXCELENCIA/USAID with the active learning model it is currently applying in more than 1,700 schools of its network. The Government of Equatorial Guinea is very interested in improving the quality of its educational system and feels that

EXCELENCIA/USAID is an excellent model to be followed to achieve that objective. During the visit, Ayevegue and Ondó visited several EXCELENCIA/USAID rural schools and met with MINED authorities. They expressed their satisfaction with what they were able to see and congratulated MINED for the results achieved with this unique experience. MINED authorities felt that this visit was very important and issued a press release about their visit.



EXCELENCIA/USAID SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT

In September EXCELENCIA/USAID signed a cooperation agreement with the UNO Foundation and CARE International of Nicaragua to integrate experiences that strengthen educational quality in the schools these organizations serve.

CARE International will contribute the lessons learned through its PROGEDES and Primero Aprendo (I Learn First) projects. The UNO Foundation has agreed to provide training on mathematics teaching to all school teachers, to secure financial support to reinforce teacher training, and to extend the CARE and EXCELENCIA/USAID experiences to a larger number of schools in the country. EXCELENCIA/USAID will contribute its active teaching approach and provide training on its approach to school technical staff and teachers. The schools of the organizations signing this Agreement will be gradually incorporated into the EXCELENCIA/USAID school network.

Upon signing the agreement, Marcela Sevilla Sacasa, the UNO Foundation Director, commented, "This Agreement represents the commitment of our organizations to overcoming the poverty that strikes the most vulnerable groups in society such as children and adolescents by extending education coverage and quality and encouraging community participation in education management." José Ignacio Mata, Director of EXCELENCIA/USAID said "Establishing alliances with organizations interested in the educational equation is one of EXCELENCIA/USAID strategies to ensure the expansion of our approach to the largest number of schools possible."

The Agreement was signed by Marcela Sevilla Sacasa, UNO Foundation Director, Ralph Richard Merrian Mendoza, CARE Director in Nicaragua, and José Ignacio Mata Gamarra, EXCELENCIA/USAID Director.

ANNEX

ANNEX 1: Status of the Production of Materials for Inter-Cultural Bilingual Education

Tables 12 a,b,c. Status of the Production of Materials for Inter Cultural Bilingual Education

a) MATHEMATICS			
Third Grade			
Units	English (L2)	Mískitu	Sumu-Mayangna
I		Ready for press	Translation under review
II	Design and layout	Ready for press	Translation under review
III	Design and layout	Ready for press	Being re-developed
IV	Design and layout	Ready for press	
V		Final editing	

Fourth Grade			
Units	English (L2)	Mískitu	Sumu-Mayangna
I	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated
II	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated
III	Ready for press		Design and layout
IV	Review and editing	Design and layout	Review and editing

b) SPANISH (L1) NATIVE TONGUES (L2)				
Third Grade				
Units	Spanish	English (L2)	Mískitu	Sumu-Mayanga
I	Design and layout	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated
II	Design and layout	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated
III	Preparation completed	Ready for press	Review and editing	Review and editing
IV	Review and editing		Review and editing	Review and editing
I	Design and layout	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated

c) Fourth Grade				
Unit	Spanish	English (L2)	Miskitu	Sumu-Mayanga
I	Design and layout	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated
II	Design and layout	Ready for press	Being translated	Being translated
III	Preparation completed	Ready for press	Review and editing	Review and editing
IV	Review and editing		Review and editing	Review and editing

ANNEX 2: Current Situation of RAAN Schools Affected by Hurricane Felix.

This table shows the RAAN schools that are part of the EXCELENCIA/USAID network (66), those that were affected by Hurricane Felix (56), and where they hold classes after re-starting.

Table 13: Current Situation of RAAN Schools Affected by Hurricane Felix

Municipality	Network Schools	In schools and churches	In churches	With tents	No roofs	With minor damages	At private homes	No damages
<i>Puerto Cabezas</i>	15			12	2	1		
<i>Bonanza</i>	10	4			1	2	3	
<i>Rosita</i>	13	2	3	1	2	3	2	
<i>Prinzapolka</i>	9			2		7		
<i>Waspan</i>	9				2	7		
<i>Siuna</i>	9							9
<i>Mulukuku</i>	1							1
TOTAL	66	6	3	15	7	20	5	10