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**EXCELENCIA Quarterly Report**  
January 1, 2008 – March 31, 2008



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)

Main Contractor: American Institutes for Research (AIR)

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

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Official Contact For the Contractor: Markus Broer  
Project Manager  
1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Tel. 202 403-5524  
Fax 202 403-5979  
Email: [mbroer@air.org](mailto:mbroer@air.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT</b> .....	2
<b>ACRONYMS</b> .....	4
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	5
<b>PROJECT ACTIVITIES</b> .....	7
<b>I. RESULT NO. 1: EXPANSION OF THE NETWORK OF EXCELENCIA SCHOOLS THAT APPLY THE APA METHODOLOGY</b> .....	7
<b>A) Expansion of the Network of Schools</b> .....	7
<b>B) Training Activities</b> .....	12
<b>C) School Site Visits</b> .....	15
<b>D) Alliances with Other Organizations Supporting Educational Initiatives</b> .....	17
<b>E) Delivery of Materials to Network Schools</b> .....	17
<b>F) Expansion Activities in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast (FADCANIC)</b> .....	17
<b>G) Achievements under Result No. 1</b> .....	19
<b>II. RESULT NO. 2. NEW COMPETENCY-BASED PRIMARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM THAT INCLUDES INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION VALIDATED AND INCORPORATED INTO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM</b> .....	19
<b>A) National Consultative Process on the New Curriculum</b> .....	19
<b>B) Production of Materials for Intercultural Bilingual Education</b> .....	20
<b>C) Achievements Under Result No. 2</b> .....	20
<b>III. RESULT NO. 3: LONGITUDINAL STUDIES AND ADDITIONAL RESEARCH TO ASSESS PROJECT IMPACT AND FIELD STUDIES TO SET UP EFFECTIVE CHANNELS TO IMPROVE TRANSITION TO PRIMARY EDUCATION</b> .....	20
<b>A) Support to Result No. 4</b> .....	20
<b>B) Application of Assessment Tests in Schools under Result No. 4</b> .....	20
<b>C) 2007 Annual Assessment: Academic Performance in Mathematics and Reading Comprehension of Third Graders in Schools Participating in the Validation of the New Primary School Curriculum</b> .....	21
<b>D) Follow-Up on Processing and Consolidating Data for Project Indicators</b> .....	23
<b>E) Study on Successful Transition to Primary School (Save the Children Federation USA)</b> .....	24
<b>F) Achievements Under Result No. 3</b> .....	25

IV. RESULT NO. 4: EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF PRIVATELY MANAGED SCHOOLS APPLYING THE MODEL SCHOOL APPROACH THROUGHOUT NICARAGUA. ....	26
<b>V. OTHER TOPICS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## ACRONYMS

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

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this first quarter of 2008, the Project began implementing its institutionalization strategy as planned last quarter. The results have been promising. The Ministry of Education has designed an integrated quality education model based on the model developed by EXCELENCIA/USAID. As stated by the Minister, “*This constitutes the institutionalization of EXCELENCIA in the national education system. If we had not made this decision, the Project proposal would have ended at the end of September 2009.*” The Project directors and technical specialists were immediately incorporated into appropriate committees and task forces to implement the integrated model, and will work to make available all the experience developed over the years and maintain the technical leadership of this implementation effort as much as possible. Other donors such as CARE, UNICEF, Plan International and the UN Population Fund are contributing funding to this effort.

EXCELENCIA/USAID has continued supporting the Ministry of Education (MINED) in the national consultation process, supporting the consolidation and analysis of the results stemming from the use of various instruments in the consultation. MINED has acknowledged and appreciated this support and, via a formal letter from the Minister, has requested funding for the application of the new curriculum in the country’s multi-grade schools. We note that one of the novel characteristics of this new curriculum, that distinguishes it from other curriculum revision efforts in Latin America, is that it uses textbooks that are specifically produced for this educational methodology. The textbooks, like those developed for the regular primary school methodology, were produced and validated as the Project’s first step. The Minister’s formal request represents a clear commitment and firm intention to implement the new curriculum. EXCELENCIA/USAID is seeking alliances and taking measures to support MINED in the activities related to implementing the new curriculum.

EXCELENCIA/USAID representatives continue to participate in the various committees that have formed (now subcommittees of the Quality Education Committee), which reaffirms the MINED’s acknowledgement of the Project’s role in supporting the quality education policy promoted by this administration.

Under Result No. 1, which involves the expansion of the APA methodology to new schools, the Project has incorporated 545 new schools into the network this quarter.

The MINED’s decision to establish *Talleres de Evaluación, Planificación y Capacitación Educativa* (Educational Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops – TEPCES) as the only official training events could affect the target number of trained people proposed in the EXCELENCIA/USAID project indicators. However, the Project’s technical specialists are participating in the TEPCES design and delivery teams and many of the network mentor schools have been chosen as TEPCES sites in the departments.

Under Result No. 3, the Project team processed and analyzed data obtained from the application of academic performance tests in Spanish and Mathematics to third grade students from a sample of 62 schools participating in the new curriculum validation process. These results established the performance baseline for third grade boys and girls in reading and mathematics, providing useful elements for the revision of the

curriculum and allowing for more effective introduction both of materials and teaching methods.

Under Result No. 4, EXCELENCIA/USAID will select seven NGOs to support the 300 supported schools that will be incorporated into the APA network expansion. This quarter, the Project signed subcontracts with four NGOs and now has formal commitments to participate from all seven NGOs selected. The project will begin immediately to incorporate the new schools into the network and train the NGO technical specialists and teachers. In a parallel activity, EXCELENCIA/USAID continued negotiations on, and made adjustments to the proposals of three other NGOs, with whom the project hopes to sign subcontracts in April.

Meanwhile, FADCANIC has completed the production of the EIB materials for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years' multi-grade curriculum and begun planning for their validation in a sample of 50 schools. The team has also begun selecting and hiring specialists who will produce materials for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years.

Save the Children continued supporting the experimental schools in which they are currently working, as well as their successful transition program to first grade, and continued carrying out training for teachers, parents and the community. They also continued classroom-based teacher assessment in the schools that participate in their study.



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### **Toward the Institutionalization of the Project's Educational Approach**

The Ministry of Education has adopted the slogan, "Now, it's quality that counts" for 2008 and launched activities within the framework of the institutional policy of "Better Education", which was established by the current Minister at the beginning of his administration. Through the initiative of the Minister, MINED is developing an Integrated Quality Education Model based on the expansion model implemented by EXCELENCIA/USAID through its mentor and satellite schools network.

To design this model and plan for its implementation, MINED has formed a steering committee and technical task forces. The steering committee is composed of representatives from MINED, EXCELENCIA/USAID, CARE, UNICEF, IMPRUH and UNFPA (the UN Population Fund). These organizations will contribute to the model's development both technically and financially. Various technical task forces have been formed in the departments to propose the distribution of mentor and nuclear schools (the name to be given to schools that the Project currently calls satellite schools). The steering committee has met various times and facilitated a first workshop with departmental delegates to collect their ideas on the proposed model and build the network of schools in each region.

The Chief of Party and Project staff in charge of Result No. 1 have met directly with the Minister to analyze the model and offer technical advice its development and implementation based on project experience. The Minister has stated that he considers this Integrated Quality Education Model to be the basis for the institutionalization of EXCELENCIA/USAID.

Project representatives are participating in the Educational Quality Committee and in corresponding Curricular Revision and Teacher Training Subcommittees.

### ***I. Result No. 1: Expansion of the Network of EXCELENCIA Schools that Apply the APA Methodology***

#### **A) Expansion of the Network of Schools**

During the first quarter of 2008, EXCELENCIA/USAID officially incorporated 545 new schools into the network, increasing the total number of participating educational institutions to 2,307. This represents 1,667 schools more than the number participating at project start-up (640). This group of schools includes the 267 schools incorporated under Component IV. Presently, there are in total 2,382 schools in the network but, in terms of commitment to the EXCELENCIA/USAID indicators, a school is only considered officially a part of the network when its unique code number is officially confirmed. There are schools that share the same unique code number because they were annexed to others with the same code. The Project is working to resolve this in order to eliminate the gap between the number of supported schools and those that are officially reported for Project indicator purposes.

Table 1: EXCELENCIA-Supported Schools, by Quarter and Category Through

Schools Served by EXCELENCIA per Quarter and Category									
	Feb. 2006	Jun. 2006	Sep. 2006	Dec. 2006	Mar. 2007	Jun. 2007	Sep. 2007	Dec. 2007	Mar. 2008
<b>Public schools</b>									
Mentor Schools	112	184	184	190	232	232	232	232	245
Satellite Schools	528	526	749	930	899	1,327	1,473	1,530	1,795
<b>Sub-Tot. Public</b>									<b>2,040</b>
<b>Result 4 schools</b>									
Mentor Schools									41
Satellite Schools									226
<b>Sub-Total Result 4</b>									<b>267</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>1,131</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,705</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>2,307</b>

Source: Project EXCELENCIA. March 2008

Table No. 2 shows the distribution of current EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools by modality and department as of December 2007.

Table 2: Distribution of Network Public Schools, by Category and Department.

Department	Multi-Grade	Multi-Grade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Satellite	Mentor	Total
BOACO	62	0	18	0	72	8	80
CARAZO	61	0	23	0	73	11	84
CHINANDEGA	142	0	74	0	197	19	216
CHONTALES	90	0	22	0	101	11	112
ESTELI	60	0	33	0	85	8	93
GRANADA	62	0	32	0	79	15	94
JINOTEGA	92	0	28	0	110	10	120
LEON	94	0	40	0	111	23	134
MADRIZ	87	0	23	0	96	14	110
MANAGUA	73	0	102	0	144	31	175
MASAYA	39	0	49	0	76	12	88
MATAGALPA	108	0	52	0	145	15	160
NUEVA SEGOVIA	91	0	33	0	108	16	124
RAAN	16	28	10	19	60	13	73
RAAS	103	4	36	11	137	17	154
RIO SAN JUAN	67	0	17	0	76	8	84
RIVAS	93	0	46	0	125	14	139
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1,795</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>2,040</b>

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID, March 2008

Table 3 shows the distribution of schools by department managed by private or faith-based organizations that receive MINED support.

Table 3: Privately-Managed Schools Supported, By Category and Department

Department	Multi-grade	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Mentor	Satellite	Total
BOACO	0	1	0		1	1
CARAZO	0	5	0	1	4	5
CHINANDEGA	2	4	0	1	5	6
CHONTALES	0	4	0	1	3	4
ESTELI	0	3	0	1	2	3
JINOTEGA	0	1	0		1	1
LEON	8	23	0	6	25	31
MANAGUA	1	79	0	9	71	80
MASAYA	0	10	0	1	9	10
MATAGALPA	1	6	0	1	6	7
NUEVA SEGOVIA	0	1	0		1	1
RAAN	36	25	1	11	51	62
RAAS	45	10	1	9	47	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>267</b>

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID Project, March 2008

Table 4 shows the number of schools supported by the organizations that had signed contracts by March 31, 2008. Approximately 44% of the schools included in this component through the above date correspond to the North and South Atlantic regions.

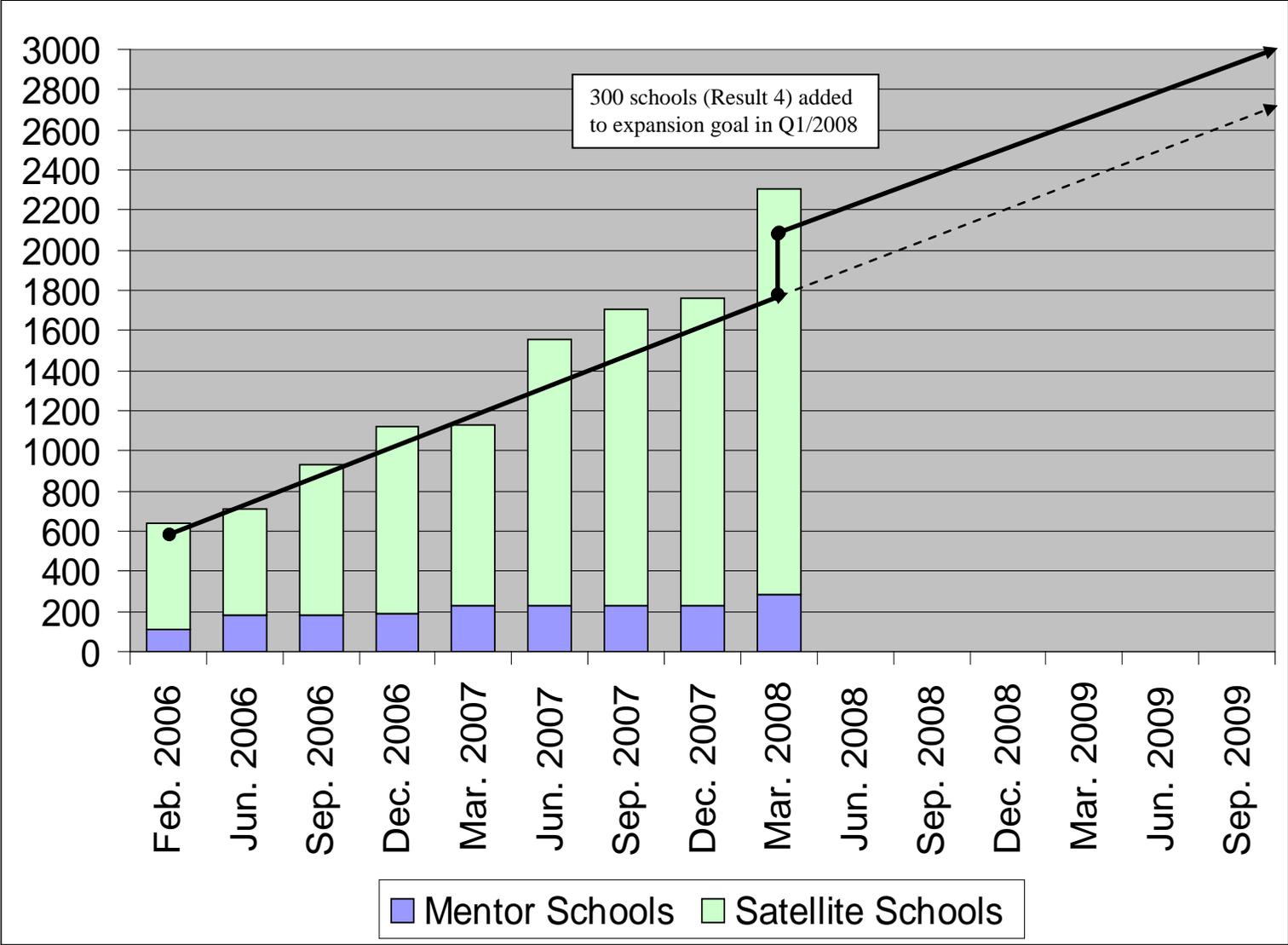
Table 4: Number of Privately-Managed Schools by Contracted NGO

Department	ALISTAR	FE Y ALEGRIA	FUND. LEON 2000	IGLESIA MORAVA	NEHEMIAS	VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	Total
BOACO					1		1
CARAZO					5		5
CHINANDEGA					6		6
CHONTALES					4		4
ESTELI					3		3
JINOTEGA					1		1
LEON		8	15		8		31
MANAGUA					81		81
MASAYA					10		10
MATAGALPA					7		7
NUEVA SEGOVIA					1		1
RAAN	13			13		36	62
RAAS			0	4	6	45	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>267</b>

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID Project, March 2008

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 under Result 1.**



The Project began 2007 with 144 municipalities participating. 149 are now participating, which represents 97% national coverage (total of 153 municipalities in the country).

Table 5 shows the progress in extending EXCELENCIA/USAID network coverage. Updated MINED Statistics Department data is used in these computations. According to this data, in the first quarter of 2008, the Project network is reaching 27% of the schools and 44% of the primary school students registered countrywide. In the same way, 46% of the primary school teachers work in EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools.

*Table No. 5. EXCELENCIA Expansion Status as of March 2008*

<b>Coverage by Municipality</b>	
Number of municipalities in the country	153
Number of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA	149
<b>% of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>Coverage by schools</b>	
Number of primary education schools (MINED 2007)	8,580
Number of schools served by EXCELENCIA as of June 2007	2,307
<b>% of primary schools served by EXCELENCIA as of June 2007</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Coverage by student enrollment</b>	
Total of initial enrollment in primary education 2007*	952,964
Total of enrollment at EXCELENCIA school as of June 2007	415,717
<b>% of enrollment at EXCELENCIA schools as of June 2007</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Coverage by teacher</b>	
Total number of primary education teachers 2007*	30,192
Number of teachers at EXCELENCIA schools	13,910
<b>% of Teachers at EXCELENCIA schools</b>	<b>46%</b>

Source: MINED, Statistics Department, Excelencia Project, March 2008.  
Latest Figures Available at MINED.

### **Coverage of Teachers under the EXCELENCIA/USAID Schools Network**

A total of 13,910 teachers (11,188 women and 2,722 men) were participating in the EXCELENCIA/USAID school network through March 2008. Of these, 11,898 (9,805 women and 2,093 men) work in the network's public schools, and 2,012 (1,383 women and 629 men) work in the supported schools incorporated this quarter. The total number of teachers working in the Project schools represents 46% of the total number of MINED-registered teachers in the country's primary schools.

*Table 6: Teachers Working in the Project Network's Public Schools.*

<b>Department</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boaco	336	51	387
Carazo	387	93	480
Chinandega	1,133	185	1,318
Chontales	408	40	448
Estelí	530	84	614
Granada	491	120	611
Jinotega	561	121	682
León	495	250	745
Madriz	366	97	463
Managua	1,498	272	1,770
Masaya	655	146	801

Matagalpa	826	140	966
Nueva Segovia	490	112	602
RAAN	138	63	201
RAAS	617	156	773
Rio San Juan	246	63	309
Rivas	628	100	728
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,805</b>	<b>2,093</b>	<b>11,898</b>

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID Project, March 2008

Table 7: Teachers Working in Supported Schools

Department	FEMALE	MALE	Total
BOACO	9	0	9
CARAZO	35	26	61
CHINANDEGA	44	16	60
CHONTALES	42	8	50
ESTELI	25	7	32
JINOTEGA	7	4	11
LEON	271	98	369
MANAGUA	557	263	820
MASAYA	88	39	127
MATAGALPA	40	20	60
NUEVA SEGOVIA	11	6	17
RAAN	139	104	243
RAAS	115	38	153
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,383</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>2,012</b>

## B) Training Activities

During the quarter, 2,592 people (1,900 women and 692 men) participated in EXCELENCIA/USAID training activities. Of these, 670 (430 women and 240 men) participated in activities in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast, and 184 (155 women and 29 men) were trained by Save the Children. The trainings were carried out under the various Project components. For Component 1, the number of trainings was reduced by the Ministry, which is now focusing on monthly TEPCES. Field technical specialists who will be responsible for administering the pre-test to third graders in schools supported by NGOs were trained as part of Component 3. Under this component, we also trained a group of Spanish and mathematics teachers and experts to determine the performance levels reached by pupils in the Spanish and mathematics tests administered for the 2007 Annual Assessment. Under Component 4, under which expansion to supported schools will be carried out, we designed and delivered a series of initial trainings to technical specialists and teachers from participating NGOs.

Table 8: Training Activities

Activity	Days	Participants		Total
		F	M	
Training on 2008 Pre-Test	2	19	11	30
Development of Academic Performance Levels	2	21	6	27
Training of NGO School Coordinators	5	32	36	68
MINED Directors' and Advisors' Technical Meeting	1	288	135	423
Initial Trainings for the 2008 School Year (1 <sup>st</sup> TEPCE)	4	22	5	27
Training for Directors of the Centro Nehemías (C.N.) Schools	1	139	73	212
Training on the My Own Name Project for reading and writing (C.N.)	1	651	95	746
Training of Iglesia Morava and ALISTAR Coordinators	2	0	7	7
First Session on Multi-Grade Education (Fé y Alegría)	1	14	2	16
Coordination and Planning for Fé y Alegría Directors	1	3	2	5
Training on APA Methodology (Vicariato Apostólico de Bluefields)	3	36	20	56
Training for Vicariato Apostólico de Bluefields School Teachers	3	25	28	53
Training on APA Methodology and Instructional Components (Fundación León)	2	37	2	39
Training on My Own Name Project (Fundación León)	2	30	1	31
Workshop No. 1. School Welcome Session (Save the Children)	1	25	2	27
Phonological Awareness Workshop (Save the Children)	1	15	0	15
Workshop on Importance of School and Parents' Role (Save the Children))	1	113	27	140
APA Methodology Workshop in 30 Schools (FADCANIC/RAAS)	1	208	39	247
Workshop on Student Government in 24 schools (FADCANIC/RAAS)	1	113	141	254
Workshop on Organization and Operation of Parents' Councils in 3 schools (FADCANIC/RAAS)	1	20	5	25
Workshop on APA Methodology in the Bluefields Teacher Training School (FADCANIC/RAAS)	1	34	38	72
Workshop on APA Methodology (FADACNIC/RAAN) in 50 Schools	1	55	17	72
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1900</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>2592</b>

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID, March 2008

### The Year's First Technical Meeting with Local Authorities

During this quarter, EXCELENCIA also carried out the first technical meetings of the year in the various departments with the directors of the Mentor Schools and local educational authorities to plan the Project's intervention and expansion for the period. During this first meeting, it was noted that most of the Mentor School directors were new. This meant that the facilitators had to begin their training at a basic level. The major achievement of these first technical meetings was exposing the new authorities to the project's focus and garnering their support.

### The Case of the TEPCES

This year, the MINED decided to institutionalize a new methodology for implementing the Educational Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops (TEPCES). This is now the sole training methodology for the teachers and technical specialists in the various departments. EXCELENCIA/USAID immediately integrated itself into the TEPCES planning and implementation process, recognizing the need to work closely with MINED and at the same time meet the project goals for the number of people trained.

As a first step, central MINED level teams were formed. Membership included government officials and technical specialists from the MINED central level, with

Project facilitators invited to advise the training in the departments for which they were responsible. First, the teams worked primarily at the central level in planning the TEPCES. Later, they traveled to the various departments to plan trainings for implementation at municipality level. Project facilitators held internal strategic planning meetings to determine how to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the TEPCES to develop the trainings necessary to expand the Project purpose. The facilitators participated in all the trainings held in their Departments. In the case of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast, the Project representative participated in the central level training and planning. By having facilitators participate in central level training many of the EXCELENCIA/USAID themes developed in mentor and satellite schools were incorporated into the various departments' training plans. FADCANIC participated in the organization of the TEPCES in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast. In many cases, the trainings held at departmental level were held in Mentor Schools of the EXCELENCIA/USAID network. This contributed to the acceptance of the Project's role and the institutionalization of the Project model at local level.

In addition to participating in the TEPCES, Project facilitators are making efforts to continue local training in mentor and satellite schools, as well as sharing of experience among schools, directors, teachers, pupils and parents of the network.

Project participation in the TEPCES was favorably acknowledged in the evaluation that various teams carried out.

*Table 9: Support to the Educational Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops (TEPCES)*

PRE-TEPCES				TEPCES			
Dept.	Municipality	Pre-TEPCE Site	Date	Dept.	Municipality	Schools where TEPCE held	Date
Nueva Segovia	Ocotol Mozonte	MINED Municipal Esc. Hérmenes Gómez	February 27-28	Nueva Segovia	Ciudad Antigua	Monseñor Madrigal	February 29
Madriz	Somoto.  Cusmapa-Las Sabanas	MINED Departmental  MINED Municipal	March 26 - 27	Madriz	Telpaneca	Oscar Maradiaga  Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe	March 28
Estelí	San Juan de Limay.	MINED Municipal	March 26 - 27	Estelí.	San Nicolás	Instituto Nacional Enmanuel Mongalo	March 28
Chinandega	Chinandega  Corinto	MINED Municipal MINED Municipal	February 27	Chinandega	Villanueva	Jerusalén	February 29
Rivas	Rivas	MINED Departmental	February 28	Rivas	Rivas	José Ma. Moncada	February 29
Rivas	Tola	MINED Municipal	March 27	Rivas	Tola	Salomón Ibarra Mayorga.	March 28

PRE-TEPCES				TEPCES			
Dept.	Municipality	Pre-TEPCE Site	Date	Dept.	Municipality	Schools where TEPCE held	Date
León	León Achuapa	MINED Deptmtl. MINED Municipal	March 27	León	Achuapa	Instituto Nacional San José	March 28
Masaya	Masaya	MINED Departmental	February 27	Masaya	Masaya	Cristóbal Rugada.	February 29
Granada	Granada	MINED municipal	February 27	Granada	Granada	Carlos A. Bravo.	February 29
Granada	Granada	MINED Dept. and Municipal	March 27	Granada	Granada	Carlos A. Bravo.	March 28
Managua	Managua	MINED Dept.	February 27	Managua	Villa El Carmen	Santa Rita	February 29
Managua	Managua Ticuanetepe	MINED Managua Department and MINED Municipal, Ticuanetepe	March 27	Managua	Ticuanetepe	Instituto Público.	March 28
Chontales	Juigalpa La Libertad	MINED Departmental MINED Municipal	March 27	Chontales	La Libertad	José Reyes Canales.	March 28
Matagalpa	Matagalpa	MINED Departmental	February 27	Matagalpa	San Dionisio	Emmanuel Mongalo y Rubio.	February 29
Jinotega	Jinotega y La Concordia	MINED Departmental and Esc. Benjamín Zeledón	March 27	Jinotega	San Rafael del Norte	José Mamerto Martínez	March 28
Jinotega	Jinotega	Max Sesqui and Esc. José Dolores Rivera	February 27 - 28	Jinotega	San Rafael del Norte	José Mamerto Martínez	February 29
RAAS	Muelle de los Bueyes	MINED departmental	February 27	RAAS	Muelle de los Bueyes	Cristo Redentor	February 29
Río San Juan	San Carlos	MINED Departmental	March 27	Río San Juan	El Almendro	El Almendro	March 28

### C) School Site Visits

There are three types of site visits made by the facilitators: follow-up and advisory visits to schools that are already part of the Project network; verification visits to schools proposed for membership in the network as Mentor Schools; and visits to schools that

are participating in the new curriculum validation process. In the follow-up and advisory visits to network schools, priority was given to advising the earliest grades on the “My Own Name” project, whose purpose is to teach reading and writing. The purpose of the visits to schools in the validation sample was to support the teachers in developing the new curriculum and become aware of the achievements and difficulties in its application. The EXCELENCIA/USAID facilitators made 203 visits this quarter to schools in the Pacific zone and 93 visits in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean, as shown in the following tables.

*Table 10: Follow-Up and Advisory Visits to Network Schools on the Pacific Coast*

Department	Municipalities	Visits
León	6	11
Jinotega	1	1
Matagalpa	2	4
Granada	4	18
Río San Juan	2	4
Carazo	4	8
Rivas	3	5
Managua	8	22
Boaco	4	9
Chontales	3	5
Chinandega	5	15
Estelí	3	10
Madriz	4	6
Nueva Segovia	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>125</b>

*Table 11. Verification Visits to Proposed Mentor Schools*

Department	Municipalities	Visits
León	1	1
Matagalpa	1	1
Granada	3	6
Río San Juan	1	1
Carazo	2	3
Rivas	1	3
Managua	1	2
Nueva Segovia	4	5
Estelí	2	3
Madriz	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>

*Table 12: Follow-Up and Advisory Visits to Validation Schools*

Department	Municipalities	Visits
León	3	3
Jinotega	1	2
Matagalpa	2	6
Granada	1	3
Río San Juan	4	7
Carazo	3	5
Rivas	5	10
Managua	2	2
Chontales	1	1
Chinandega	2	7
Estelí	1	1
RAAS/ Zelaya Central	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>49</b>

## D) Alliances with Other Organizations Supporting Educational Initiatives

During this quarter, EXCELENCIA/USAID held meetings with the American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Nicaragua (AMCHAM) to standardize the early trainings this year with those schools that the organizations have in their school networks that intend to apply the Project focus. The Project team also held coordination meetings with Fundación UNO, Banco UNO and CARE International's *Proyecto Primero Aprendo* in order to develop an integrated plan for the Rivas department where Fundación UNO is prepared to support a number of schools.

## E) Delivery of Materials to Network Schools

In support of the network expansion, we delivered the following materials this quarter to Project network schools:

- 840 packets of materials to benefit 210 Mentor Schools
- 87,067 regular primary school books to validate the new curriculum, which benefits 50 validation schools
- 4,958 multi-grade primary school books to validate the new curriculum, which benefits 51 validation schools and 47 Mentor Schools
- 30 bicycles for teachers.

## F) Expansion Activities in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast (FADCANIC)

### *Expansion Activities:*

The EXCELENCIA Project, through FADCANIC, presently reaches 108 schools - 24 mentor schools and 84 satellite schools. Table 13 shows the number of schools covered by region and type of school.

*Table 13. Schools Covered by the EXCELENCIA Project in the Autonomous Regions of Atlántico Norte and Sur, with numbers of teachers and pupils*

Region	N° Schools	Status		Language		Category		Total Teachers		Total Pupils	
		Mentor	Satellite	Span	Biling	Reg	Mult.	M	F	M	F
RAAS	42	10	32	24	19	26	16	461	375	11,850	5,205
RAAN	66	14	52	*	*	*	*	*	*	14,127	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>84</b>								

\* Information unavailable.

Source: FADCANIC First Quarterly Report 2008, April 28, 2008

## Training Activities

In both regions, EXCELENCIA/USAID is in the process of validating instructional materials for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of the multi-grade system in native languages in 50 selected schools. To maximize the use of available funds for this activity, we adopted a strategy that combines classroom-based training activities with the process of validating instructional materials.

The Project staff in the regions also participated in the monthly TEPCES carried out by the Ministry of Education. This integration is considered as being quite productive for the Project since it offers the opportunity to introduce APA strategies to teachers during the TEPCES upon the request of some MINED municipal delegates.

Table 14: Summary of Trainings in RAAN and RAAS

Topics	Participants			Duration	N° of Schools
	Women	Men	Total		
<b>RAAS</b>					
APA Methodologies	208	39	247	1 day/school	30
Organization and Operation of Student Governments	113	141	254	1 day/school	24
Organization and Operation of Parents' Councils	20	5	25	1 day/school	3
APA Methodology in the Bluefields Teacher Training School	34	38	72	1 day	1
<b>RAAN</b>					
APA Methodology (classroom-based)	55	17	72	1 day/school	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>670</b>		

Source: FADCANIC, Consolidated Regional Quarterly Reports, April 2008

## Classroom-Based Advisory Visits in Both Regions

The regional teams carried out 93 school advisory and follow-up visits during the quarter. During these visits, the teams noted some progress in the application of the APA methodology, such as greater parental participation in the administration of schools, and better relating of the teaching topics with the social and cultural milieu of the pupils.

The teams also observed some limitations in the relationship between mentor schools and their satellites, especially in the RAAN, because of the impact of Hurricane Felix in the regions. One factor that has also affected this relationship is that many of the previously trained school directors have been taken from their responsibilities and schools. It is necessary as soon as possible for teachers to have available instructional materials to effectively apply the Project focus. This is why EIB materials production is fundamental.

Table 15: Number of Visits Carried Out by FADCANIC Technical Specialists

Region	Centers Visited	Total Visits	Teachers Involved		
			Female	Male	Total
RAAS	42	42	375	86	461
RAAN	50	51	55	17	72
<b>Totals</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>533</b>

Source: FADCANIC, Regional Quarterly Reports, April 2008.

## **G) Achievements under Result No. 1**

- *The Project has moved forward in its strategy of institutionalizing its proposed methodology to the MINED.* MINED is developing an Integrated Quality Education Expansion Model based on the EXCELENCIA/USAID model. Project directors are participating in the committees responsible for developing the central level model and Project facilitators are participating in the development of the departmental-level model. With this MINED decision, the expansion of the model is ensured indefinitely until it covers all public schools in the country.

- *EXCELENCIA/USAID has incorporated 278 new public schools into the network during this quarter and 267 supported schools through the new Result 4.* The Project plans to meet its goal for integrating public schools into the network this year so that all the network schools may participate as long as possible in the network before the Project ends.

- *EXCELENCIA/USAID has been integrated into the MINED training system.* This year, MINED established one sole training methodology (TEPCES), into which the Project has been completely integrated. EXCELENCIA introduced into the TEPCES process the contents it needs to expand its quality education approach.

## **II. Result No. 2. New Competency-Based Primary Education Curriculum that includes Intercultural Bilingual Education Validated and Incorporated into the National Education System**

### **A) National Consultative Process on the New Curriculum**

The Project has continued supporting MINED in the collection, processing and analysis of the information from the national curriculum consultative process. Once all the information is available, the Project will continue supporting the inclusion of the changes stemming from the consultation into the educational materials.

MINED has formally requested continued USAID support in the reproduction of the corresponding materials for the multi-grade primary education category. EXCELENCIA/USAID has continued to analyze the potential costs that nationwide implementation of the new curriculum might involve so as to provide this information to MINED as part of the Project's support for the management of funds for this task.

EXCELENCIA/USAID representatives have been incorporated into the National Educational Quality Committee, and are further involved in the subcommittees on curriculum, evaluation, secondary education and teacher training. They present Project positions at these committee meetings and contribute Project experiences in implementing them. Participation in these committees ensures Project access to basic decisions on the development of national educational policies.

## **B) Production of Materials for Intercultural Bilingual Education**

Once the EIB materials for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year multi-grade are developed, FADACNIC has designed a plan for their validation in the 2008-09 school year in the 50 schools under the subcontract.

This quarter, FADCANIC established a team of consultants to design materials for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

## **C) Achievements Under Result No. 2**

- *MINED has stated its formal intention to implement the new curriculum in the 2008-09 school year.* This declaration of intent concerning the new curriculum has been confirmed by the actions of the MINED vis-à-vis donors, including the formal request to USAID to support this effort.

- *Validation of the Intercultural, Bilingual Education materials has begun in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast.* The materials for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades are being validated by FADCANIC during the 2007-08 school year, and production of materials for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades has begun.

## **III. Result No. 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) Support to Result No. 4**

This quarter, EXCELENCIA/USAID supported the process of selecting organizations for work under Result No. 4, analyzing the characteristics of the schools that offered their proposals in order to choose from this group those that meet the USAID requirements for this new activity. This rigorous information analysis process avoided duplication and made it possible to correctly identify schools with their respective codes. That facilitated the process of proposal review and later assignment of subgrants.

### **B) Application of Assessment Tests in Schools under Result No. 4**

Once the schools for Result No. 4 were selected, the team began the process of pre-testing the instruments for assessing pupil performance in a sample of these schools. To date, the team has a design for this process, the conceptual framework and the schedule. The assessment process will use the bank of items of reading comprehension and mathematics established for the development of the tests that were part of the 2007 Annual Assessment. This assessment will construct a baseline of academic performance in third-grade pupil reading comprehension and mathematics in these schools. The assessment applied was constructed by ensuring the adequacy of the reading comprehension and mathematics tests for third grade pupils developed for the 2007

Annual Assessment compared to the particular curriculum used in these schools. This process required consultation with MINED specialists and the schools to ensure rigor.

Thirty field technical specialists participated in this assessment and the sample included 59 schools, 22 in the Atlantic region and 37 over the rest of the country. The assessment was administered to 1,511 third-grade boys and girls. The data obtained in this assessment are being entered into computerized data files for later analysis.

### **C) 2007 Annual Assessment: Academic Performance in Mathematics and Reading Comprehension of Third Graders in Schools Participating in the Validation of the New Primary School Curriculum**

The Project considered it important to assess the academic performance of pupils in the schools that participated in the validation of the materials for the new primary school curriculum. This assessment will mark the completion of the process of validating the new curriculum. This validation would offer the MINED a model for assessing the performance of pupils under the new curriculum. For this, the 2007 Annual Assessment has the main objective of assessing the academic performance of third graders in reading comprehension and mathematics.

In this first quarter, we analyzed the results of the administration of the corresponding tests to a sample of schools participating in the validation of the curriculum.

The process of developing and administering the academic performance tests required careful planning of activities, which was done throughout 2007. It included the following steps:

- Horizontal and vertical analysis of the primary school curriculum
- Selection of the grade and area competencies for assessment
- Disaggregation of the grade and area competencies to assess into measurable objectives
- Development of instruction sheets and templates for the design of items
- Design, review and data entry of items in the selected subjects
- Development of the bank of items by area and grade
- Development, set-up and printing of the tests using the items and their indicators
- Pre-pilot testing of the instruments in six selected schools
- Analysis of the results of the pre-piloting
- Adjustment of the instruments based on the result of the pilot testing
- Selection of the sample
- Printing of the new tests (four forms for each area to assess)
- Training for field technical specialists on how to administer the tests
- Administration of the tests in the field
- Entry of the data collected
- Analysis of the results

For most of these activities, we carried out workshops in which various teams participated. These teams included Project specialists and two AIR experts. Additionally, the implementation of the various workshops was supported by two

MIDEH (Equip 2) Honduras Project experts, teachers from the Project schools and national experts in Spanish and mathematics from various regions of the country, including both Caribbean Coast regions. Close coordination with staff from the General Curriculum and Technological Development Division and the Office of the General Director of Education and Delegation was maintained in the various activities.

MINED carried out the selection of schools participating in the process of validating the curriculum. The composition of the chosen sample for the assessment was varied, as was the process of validating the curriculum. Of the schools participating, there were regular and multi-grade schools. Among the regular schools were private and public schools, as well as those not involved in project activities.

The tests were administered in November 2007 in a sample of 62 schools throughout the country from among those that participated in the validation of the new curriculum. For the purposes of analysis, the sample was classified in segments as shown in the following table. The number of schools by segment and students by group of schools selected can be seen below.

*Table 16: Sample of Schools Participating in the 2007 Annual Assessment*

	<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
1. Multi-grade schools participating in the Project network	30	469
2. Incorporated in the Project network in 2007	4	257
3. Incorporated in the Project network in 2006 or before	12	891
4. Public schools not participating in the Project network	10	713
5. Private schools not participating in the Project network	6	401
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2,731</b>

*Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID, April 2008.*

The administered tests consisted of four forms with 36 items each for each subject. These four forms were distributed among students of each section so that all the forms were equitably distributed in each section.

A group of judges trained by the Project established the levels of performance. These judges, after the corresponding analysis, recommended the following classification:

*Table 17: Identification of Academic Performance Levels*

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Very Satisfactory</b>
Reading Comprehension	0-14	15-28	29-36
Mathematics	0-15	16-30	31-36

*Source. EXCELENCIA/USAID. April 2008*

For the reading comprehension test, those levels mean that the student who responded correctly to 14 questions or fewer was judged as having unsatisfactory performance. The student with 15 to 28 correct answers had satisfactory performance, and a student responding correctly to 29-36 questions was considered to have shown very satisfactory performance.

For the mathematics test, a student responding correctly to fewer than 15 questions was considered to have performed unsatisfactorily. Responding correctly to 16-30 questions was considered to be satisfactory performance and correct responses to 31-36 questions was considered to be very satisfactory performance.

The results constituted a performance baseline in reading comprehension and mathematics for third graders. These results were analyzed with the technical rigor required for psychometric assessments, such as the RASCH model. This made it possible to calibrate scores among the four forms of the test administered to make them comparable.

Table 18: Percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students by Level of Performance as Shown in Tests, by Group of Schools.

Group of Schools	Mathematics				Reading Comprehension			
	N. S.	S.	V. S.	Total	N. S.	S.	V. S.	Total
<b>Intervention</b>								
1. Multi-Grade, Part of Project Network	73%	26%	1%	100%	52%	41%	7%	100%
2. Regular Public Schools, Incorporated in the Project Network in 2007	74%	25%	2%	100%	47%	43%	9%	100%
3. Regular Public Schools, Incorporated in the Project Network in 2006 or Earlier	63%	35%	2%	100%	38%	49%	13%	100%
<b>Control</b>								
4. Public Schools Not Included in the Project Network	68%	31%	2%	100%	46%	43%	11%	100%
5. Private Schools Not Included in the Project Network	51%	45%	4%	100%	25%	47%	28%	100%

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID, April 2008

N.S. = Unsatisfactory    S = Satisfactory    V.S.= Very Satisfactory

A preliminary analysis of the results shows some interesting aspects:

- Privately-managed school students achieved the best results. This coincides with other MINED studies.
- The next best results were obtained by students in schools that were part of the Project network since 2006 or earlier.
- The scores of students in the multi-grade category in mathematics were on average the lowest. They were similar to the results of the students of schools incorporated into the Project network more recently. In reading comprehension, the scores of students in these schools were lower than those in the “regular” category.
- In general, the reading comprehension results were better than those in mathematics.

EXCELENCIA/USAID consulted with teachers on progress in applying the curriculum planned for the school year. Their responses indicated that most of the teachers had not covered the full curriculum. They also noted the lack of textbooks, especially in multi-grade schools, which had no mathematics study guides.

## D) Follow-Up on Processing and Consolidating Data for Project Indicators

During the first quarter, the team continued monitoring Project indicators by processing and consolidating information from field activities. EXCELENCIA/USAID has a constantly updated database of the number of network schools and number of students registered in them, as well as data on a number of Project trainees. At the same time, the Project worked on the processing of information collected by the NGO schools, verifying the data to ensure that it is correctly incorporated into the Project database. This process will make it possible to construct indicators for the Project to report on and ensure prompt collection of information from these schools.

## **E) Study on Successful Transition to Primary School (Save the Children Federation USA)**

The following were the activities carried out this quarter in schools participating in the Study on Successful Transition to Primary School:

### *1. School Registration and Welcome Campaign*

A registration campaign was carried out in the two Rural Educational Nuclei (NER) for the four schools that participate in the study. Participants included MINED delegates, directors, “comarca” committees and school councils. Parents and teachers from the four communities did house-to-house visits trying to find students who, in years past, had had attendance problems and/or had failed at school. They put up posters on corners and in general stores. In Pajuil, a group of parents read a communiqué by radio calling people to register their children.

The result of this campaign was that 100% of children of pre-school, first and second grade age in the four participating communities registered for school. One added value was the recuperation of two children who had abandoned first grade in Jiquilillo and three in Fe y Alegría who left in 2007 and will continue in 2008.

### *2. “Welcome to School” Campaign*

In accordance with a manual published by Save the Children, welcoming activities were initiated in the four participating schools over the months of February and March. These activities included:

- “Mural of Wishes” developed by students in all classrooms of the four schools
- Piñatas and Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey (organized by parents)
- Pre-school pupils visit first graders and vice-versa
- Collective games: Sack Races
- Development of behavioral standards for the pupils in the pre-school classrooms and first grade (using pictograms) and second grade in their own handwriting
- Singing sessions, games involving pre-school, first and higher grades
- Dynamic presentations in each classroom to strengthen self-esteem
- Sketch books depicting “The school I want this year.”
- Development of a filing system with the name of each child. The children decorated their name with drawings.

### *3. Training for Teachers and Parents*

A total of 42 teachers (40 women and two men) and 140 parents (113 women and 27 men) participated in Save the Children trainings this quarter. The following is their distribution:

*Table 19: Number of Individuals Trained by Save the Children This Quarter*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
Welcome to School Workshop, for Teachers and Directors of Participating Schools	27	2	29
Phonological Awareness Workshop, for Teachers, Directors and Instructional Advisors	15	-	15
Workshop on the Importance of School and the Role of the Parent, for Parents	113	27	140
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>184</b>

*Source: Save The Children, Quarterly Report, January - March. April 2008.*

#### *4. Development of Modules*

Two modules were sent to the Ministry of Education for review: “The Boy’s and Girl’s Active Role” and “Self-Esteem and Personality Development.” Once MINED comments are received, Save the Children will edit and publish them.

#### *5. Equipping of Schools*

Save the Children provided eleven supply kits to pre-school, first and second grade students for the four participating schools. Each kit contained stories, mathematics pads and other materials.

#### *6. Monitoring Activities*

Save the Children completed the collection of registration data from the four participating schools and the final phase of monitoring of the validation of the educational strategy was applied for the transition in the four participating schools and in two control schools. Save studied registration data by age, gender and grade, as well as data on dropouts, grade repeating, approvals and academic performance at pre-school, first and second grade levels. The first data shows that in one year there was significant progress in the four experimental schools in all quality items. Their progress was greater than that of the two control schools. However, the dropout rate did not fall and was almost the same in experimental schools and control schools. It is hypothesized that emigration affects this indicator. Save the Children is continuing to analyze this data.

### **F) Achievements Under Result No. 3**

*- Follow-up on activities of the Second Annual Assessment of the Evaluation of the Performance of Third Grade Students in Reading Comprehension and Mathematics.* The tests were administered to a sample of schools run by private organizations who are participating in Result 4 activities, both on the Pacific Coast and the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast.

- *Updating the database for monitoring of project indicators.* The database is continually updated. This makes it possible to monitor the indicators of the Project and USAID Strategic Objective. The new participating schools have been integrated into the database in Result 4.

#### ***IV. Result No. 4: Expanding the number of privately managed schools applying the model school approach throughout Nicaragua.***

Result No. 4 is set-up and operating fully. There are five main tasks under this Result:

1. Expand the EXCELENCIA/USAID model

Expand the EXCELENCIA model's successful approach to 300 non-public schools by partnering with Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) and national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), including faith-based institutions. The schools being supported will be in predominantly poor municipalities in rural areas and large, poor settlements in peri-urban or urban areas, as well as indigenous communities, including the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast.

2. Collaborate with a teacher training institution

Strengthen the capacity of one or more private academic institutions or NGOs that provides teacher education and training to prepare teachers and master teachers in the implementation of the model school approach.

3. Place focus on first grade

Decrease rates of students repeating classes (and, to a lesser extent, drop-out rates) in primary schools covered by EXCELENCIA's NGO partners with special emphasis on the critical first grade level. Coordinate with Save the Children to hold training workshops to teach technical specialists about the transition to first grade.

4. Produce educational materials

Produce educational materials for multi-grade intercultural, bilingual schools on the Caribbean Coast in the main subject areas of native languages and mathematics.

5. Adapt tests and develop formative assessment

Adapt the third grade mathematics and reading tests being developed with project support for use in privately managed schools and develop new innovative student assessments approaches, e.g., formative assessment.

These are the major achievements during this quarter:

*Through an open, criteria-based process, with input from a technical selection committee, seven NGOs/faith-based organizations were selected.*

EXCELENCIA/USAID, through Result No. 4, selected seven organizations to coordinate the expansion of EXCELENCIA to privately managed schools. A negotiation process was carried out with each NGO with respect to both technical and financial aspects (support was provided by the Project financial team). Each NGO has a proven track record in the delivery of educational services in Nicaragua; the following

NGOs/ faith-based organizations have been selected, of which six have signed their sub-grant agreements. The following table shows the organizations and number of schools provided by them to the Project.

*Table 20: NGO/Faith-Based Organizations Participating in Result No. 4*

NGO/Faith-Based Organizations participating in Result No. 4		Number of Schools
1	Iglesia Morava de Nicaragua	17
2	Fundación Alistar de Nicaragua	13
3	Centro Nehemías	133
4	Vicariato Apostólico de Bluefields	81
5	Fundación León 2000	15
6	Fe y Alegría- La Asunción	8
7	FADCANIC <sup>1</sup>	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>267<sup>2</sup></b>

Given the organizations with which Result No. 4 works, the privately managed schools serving low income and marginalized populations in Result No. 4 particularly fall into two categories: (1) schools administered by faith-based organizations or NGOs while primarily supported by public funds; and (2) schools which are administered by faith-based or other non-governmental organizations and partially subsidized by public funds.

*Result No. 4 has incorporated 267 new privately managed schools into the EXCELENCIA network this quarter<sup>3</sup>.* Despite the challenges in reaching agreements with seven separate NGOs, collaboration between EXCELENCIA and NGO staff made it possible to incorporate this number of schools. Of the 267 new privately managed schools, 118 are located in the RAAN (Atlántico Norte Autonomous Region) and the RAAS (Atlántico Sur Autonomous Region). In addition to the RAAN and the RAAS, the new privately managed schools are distributed throughout the following departments of Nicaragua:

*Table 21: Departments where new privately managed schools are located*

1. Boaco	2. Carazo	3. Chinandega	4. Chontales	5. Esteli
6. Managua	7. Masaya	8. Matagalpa	9. Jinotega	10. RAAN
11. RAAS				

Of the 267 new privately managed schools, 41 have been identified as Mentor Schools, with an average of 6-7 satellite schools for each. Mentor Schools were selected by NGOs in light of their geographical location and pedagogical strengths, as well as their ability to comply with defined criteria for the roles and responsibilities required of Mentor Schools. Mentor Schools have served and will continue to serve in the role of providing capacity building activities for each of the NGOs (to be discussed below). In

<sup>1</sup> Note that FADCANIC has not yet signed a contract due to delays.

<sup>2</sup> 223 single-session schools and 22 double-session schools (morning and afternoon sessions serving different student populations) for a total count of 267 privately managed schools.

<sup>3</sup> Also note: the number of schools from FADCANIC has not been included due to delays in signing the sub-grant.

addition, thanks to the EXCELENCIA Project materials team, materials have been distributed to NGOs for their selected Mentor Schools<sup>4</sup>.

*In addition to the incorporation of the 267 newly privately managed schools, another mechanism has been developed for the systematic training of teachers in the APA methodology.* Under Result No. 4, the teacher training program *NER* (Rural Education Nucleus) in association with *Fe y Alegría- La Asunción*, offers a teacher training program in the APA methodology to beginner teachers. After the program is complete, the participants will be qualified to be superior technical teachers or master teachers. The Result No. 4 Coordinator assigned to the teacher training school and the Result No. 4 education specialist provide technical support to the teacher and students in the *NER*. Along the same lines, the Result 4 Coordinator and technical staff of *Fe y Alegría- La Asunción* are annexed to the 8 schools which operate under the Result No. 4 sub-grant with *Fe y Alegría*.

*Result No. 4 increased the number of people trained.* During this quarter, Result No. 4 in coordination with counterpart NGOs held a total of 64 capacity building trainings in the Model School approach. Trainings have been offered to technical staff and coordinators of NGOs, as well as directors and teachers of schools in each of the previous mentioned departments. The technical training has followed the sequence below:

Training activities with NGOs
<p>1. <b>National Level:</b> A national level training was held in Managua the second week of February 2008. Important pedagogical topics were shared, including: Pedagogical Components, the APA methodology, Resource Centers and Projects in the first grade (<i>My Own Name</i>). The content was heavy for first time participants, but sufficient material was provided for NGO technical staff to begin work in the field.<sup>5</sup></p>
<p>2. <b>NGO Level:</b> Immediately following the national level training, subsequent trainings occurred at the level of each NGO with “inter-capacity trainings;” that is, the RESULT 4 EXCELENCIA Coordinators went to NGO locations and fine tuned teachings (pertinent to each NGO’s needs) on the previously presented topics.</p>
<p>3. <b>School Level:</b> With this knowledge base, NGO technical staff and coordinators confident in APA methodology, pedagogical components, resource centers and the first grade project (<i>My Own Name</i>) held trainings for school directors and sub-directors initially and then teachers in the schools in which they work. Whenever technical assistance is requested from RESULT 4 Coordinators, their presence and services are offered at training activities.</p>
<p>4. <b>First Grade:</b> In the training of teachers (in this phase of the project) most emphasis has been placed on teachers in the first and second grades, especially on the first grade project- <i>My Own Name</i>. Of 64 capacity building trainings, 22 have been solely designed or have placed specific emphasis on the first grade project- <i>My Own Name</i>.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Note: This is the first round of disbursing NGO mentor school fungible materials; a second round is envisioned in the following months.

<sup>5</sup> In addition, at the national level training, the U.S. Ambassador Paul Trivelli and USAID Deputy Director Carol Horning warmly welcomed NGOs into the EXCELENCIA Project with a symbolic signing ceremony.

5. **Next Phase:** The next phase of capacity building has started for the pedagogical components: student governments and parent committees. School visits are being made in this phase with priority placed on providing support to Mentor Schools. Quality circles are being utilized on a sporadic basis depending on needs of communities and schools. The next national level training is expected to be held in June 2008.

*Result No. 4 has also initiated coordination with counterpart NGO Save the Children USA. In order to maximize benefits of previous work done between EXCELENCIA/USAID and subcontractor Save the Children/USA, a series of trainings on the transition to first grade are being planned. Such trainings are particularly important given Result No. 4's interest in addressing high repetition rates in the first grade. Additionally, Save the Children USA offers experience in identifying interventions for retaining children in school in the early years as well as trainings on how facilitators (i.e., technical specialists) can best disseminate knowledge and learning - crucial for the quality implementation of the EXCELENCIA/USAID model and the Result No. 4 component (planned July - August 2008).*

*All data available collected to date from the new privately managed schools have been provided to the monitoring and evaluation team. Coordination has been fluid and reciprocal in order to meet project goals, especially with regard to collaboration for the development of the third grade mathematics and reading tests. In addition, a process is being outlined and defined for the formative assessments to be implemented in 30 third grade classrooms of the privately managed schools. The formative assessments will be of use to teachers so that they are able to use results immediately in order to inform (or remedy) their teaching practices - and ultimately to improve students' learning outcomes before it is too late and the end of the academic year has arrived.*

*Result No. 4 has generated strong and fluid collaboration with NGO counterparts. Counterpart NGOs are responsive and appreciative of EXCELENCIA/USAID and efforts under Result No. 4 with regard to pedagogical and technical support.*

## V. OTHER TOPICS

A high-level delegation from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Equatorial Guinea was received. Members of the delegation included the Minister of Education and Ministerial Delegate for the “tierra firme” region. The objective of the visit was to observe the operation of the school model that EXCELENCIA/USAID is promoting and how the educational components of the model were being applied. The delegation had interviews with the Nicaraguan Minister and MINED directors. Delegation members visited various network schools and had the opportunity to converse with Project facilitators and technical specialists.

## PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER

### Result No. 1:

- Provide support to the MINED in the construction of the Integrated Quality Education Model, participating in all related activities.
- Continue supporting the MINED in the development of the TEPCES through participation of the Project facilitators in all planning, implementation and evaluation activities.
- Continue additional visits to the network’s mentor schools and assess the condition of those being proposed by local educational authorities to become Mentor Schools.
- Provide advisory services and follow-up to local workshops on the third and fourth grades that will be implemented by the mentor and satellite schools.
- Organize the Second Technical Meeting with the directors of the network’s mentor schools for the purpose of assessing the first quarter and plan activities for the second, and define training topics for teachers in these schools.
- Carry out local workshops for incorporating new mentor schools into the network.

### Result No. 2:

- Continue supporting the Curriculum Transformation Committees through consultants to incorporate changes to the curriculum suggested during the national consultative process.
- Continue participating in MINED committees and sub-committees, which have been formed to implement the various educational policies.
- Participate in the assemblies of the Basic and Mid-Level Education System Committees where input is provided to the definition of educational policies.
- Strengthen the mentor and satellite schools through teacher training on APA methodology strategies as well as procedures for the expansion to satellite schools. The project will continue to distribute fungible materials and visit the schools in order to assess the performance of the pedagogical components and ensure the functioning of the student governments and parent councils. Students for the Normales will participate in these activities.
- Continue meetings and working sessions with delegations of MINED and national, regional, and local authorities in order to facilitate the coordination of the principal project tasks, particularly the validation of materials for the third and fourth grade primary multi-grade students, the development of materials for

fifth and sixth grades, and the integration of the regional TEPECS as an opportunity for further APA expansion.

### **Result No. 3:**

- Complete the analysis of the data from the 2007 Annual Assessment and develop a report to the MINED and each of the participating schools with an analysis specific to the particular results of each.
- Present the results of the Annual Assessment to the schools and the rest of the concerned entities.
- Organize the information stemming from the results of the assessment pre-test in the Result 4 schools.
- Try out and begin to use the recently incorporated Baseline Management and Consultation System.
- Fully incorporate the Project database system in Result 4 schools.
- Define the theme and scope of the 2008 Annual Assessment.

### **Result No. 4:**

- The next phase of capacity building will continue for the pedagogical components: student governments and parent committees. School visits will be made in this phase with priority on providing support to Mentor Schools. Quality circles will be utilized on a sporadic basis depending on community and school needs. The next national-level training is expected to be held in June 2008.
- Agreements with pending NGOs will be signed, and 30 new schools from the *Vicariato Apostólico de Bluefields* will be added to the network.