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EXCELENCIA Quarterly Report
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Save the Children Federation, USA**

Overview

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Save the Children Federation USA

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Acronyms

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AIR	American Institutes for Research
APA	Learn, Practice, Apply (<i>Aprendo, Practico, Aplico</i>)
BASE	Basic Education and Training Program II
COP	Chief of Party
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
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
TEPCE	Educational Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops (Original training method created by MINED)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarter, the Project concluded activities outlined in the original Cooperative Agreement objectives and began new activities under the four results of the most recent USAID-approved extension, which extended implementation through March 31, 2010.

At the same time, each Component team has been working to consolidate products for submission to USAID, to demonstrate compliance with objectives stated in the original Project proposal and its successive extensions.

The first result of the new extension to the Project has been to build capacity with the Ministry of Education to allow for the continued development, application, and evaluation of the EXCELENCIA/USAID pedagogical approach in schools, while at the same time maintaining high education quality. The mechanism proposed to this end has been the creation and training of a specialized group of teachers called “Master Teachers.” These teachers will work as a network to provide a foundation for MINED’s expansion of the method to all primary schools, within the framework of the “Integrated Quality Education Model.”

Additionally, this first result has been assigned to the Project’s original Component 1, which has developed and begun to implement a strategy and work plan for attaining this result in the time remaining in the Project.

One of the actions take is the identification of 568 “Master Teacher” candidates. They have been approved by local authorities as a demonstration of their commitment to support these teachers in their future work.

A “training in action” program has also begun, in which these candidates conduct planning in technical meetings with Project facilitators, and then combine in-person training sessions with visits to Project network schools, under the tutorship of a facilitator.

The second result is assessment of student performance in Language and Math, using modern methodologies for provision of qualitative and quantitative data, and therefore a comparison of performance to previous years. This result has been assigned to Component 3, Monitoring and Evaluation, which has already conducted the previous studies. Data from this study is currently being processed for analysis and subsequent publication.

The third result is provision of resources to Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast (FADCANIC) for validation of fifth and sixth grade Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) materials. Final products are to then be submitted to the Ministry of Education for reproduction, distribution and use in the schools. FADCANIC is currently producing the final version of third and fourth grade EIB materials, and has begun validation of fifth and sixth grade materials.

The fourth result is completion of a curriculum, in the Fe y Alegria Normal School of Lecheguagos, for specialized teacher training in multigrade schools. This curriculum has been under development and study since the Project expansion that included 300 NGO/FBO managed schools into the EXCELENCIA network, and is to be completed in

this new extension. Teacher graduates will subsequently conduct their professional practices in Project network multigrade schools. A gathering was held in Lechecuagos for representatives of Normal Schools, to present the new training curriculum for teachers specialized in multigrade primary education. It is hoped that this curriculum will begin to garner interest among the rest of the country's teacher training colleges as well.

In the administrative area, a carefully planned strategy has been developed for Project closure and submission of results. Management in each Component has prepared a table of results and products, according to those outlined in the initial Project proposal and then subsequent modifications. This will be an essential tool for final submission of deliverables and products to USAID. In the same way, a program was developed that assists in the preparation of the proposed final disposition plan of all project equipment once the Project ends.

Strengthening Institutionalization

This quarter, the Project continued to apply the institutionalization strategy developed earlier in the year. All activities related to selection and training of future Master Teachers have been agreed upon and closely coordinated with central and local MINED authorities. In doing so, it is hoped that MINED will not only support current trainings, but also continue these training into the future, alongside the Integrated Quality Education Model. MINED delivers its own trainings as well, particularly during this time of the school year, so the Project has integrated its own activities with those of MINED, to minimize obstacles in meeting objectives.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

I. Result No. 1: Capabilities of MINED staff to develop, implement and monitor the core of the EXCELENCIA comprehensive active learning classroom process in its schools with a high level of quality.

This quarter, the team of facilitators has focused activities in two parallel areas of work. The first has been the needed solidification of the Project intervention in the school network, particularly in schools added in 2009 which, consequently, have had less time to apply the Project's pedagogical approach. The second has been initial formulation of a training strategy for the group of teachers selected to specialize as Master Teachers. These teachers are to then serve as a foundation for future application of the Projects' pedagogical approach, once institutionalized, in all of the country's primary schools.

Progress has been made in the first area through visits by Project facilitators to those schools newest to the network, for reinforced classroom support in applying the Project's pedagogical components. In the second area, the Project has designed a strategy to be implemented in the limited time remaining.

The Project has designed the following strategy for achievement of Result 1:

A) Strategy Design for Specialization

The Project's Technical Team (the Director, Technical Managers and Evaluation Managers) developed, consulted and created a strategy for obtaining results in the limited time remaining, given the December school break, MINED's January 2010 training sessions prior to the start of the new school year, and time needed to close operations prior to the Project's end date.

The proposed strategy combines in-person assistance, through a series of technical meetings and refresher sessions in the Project's pedagogical components, with practical activities, in which specialization candidates visit schools under the facilitators' tutorship and provide classroom support to teachers in application of the components. The end goal is for specialization candidates to acquire not only a thorough knowledge of the Project's pedagogical components, but also the ability to increase their application, in the same way the Project facilitators have been doing. In so doing, the Master Teachers will become the new promoters of the components, within the framework of the Integrated Quality Education Model adopted by MINED.

In order to implement this strategy, the facilitator team created a document entitled, "Master Teacher Training Course." This document will serve as the basis for Master Teacher candidate activities throughout the specialization process.

The entire Master Teacher specialization strategy has been developed in coordination with central and regional MINED authorities, who have approved all training events carried out this quarter.

B) Selection of specialization candidates:

In order to select candidates to specialize as Master Teachers, information from the Project's training database was used. This database shows the names, positions and geographical location of anyone who has attended any type of Project training. This list of people trained was further narrowed by selecting those who had received most training in the pedagogical components, assuming that these trainees would be best prepared for the specialization program.

In this first selection, 568 candidates were chosen from all of the country's municipalities. These candidates were then submitted for consideration and approval to local authorities, in order to assure local commitment to future continuity and support for expansion of the Project's pedagogical approach.

All candidates will receive ongoing assessment throughout the specialization process, until they can demonstrate that they qualify for the final certificate, which will in turn identify them as specialized teachers and replicators of the Project's pedagogical approach.

C) Training of Master Teacher Candidates

1. Technical meetings

As part of the specialization process, two decentralized technical meetings were held with candidates in the 16 departments of the Pacific region. The first meeting laid the basis for the Master Teachers specialization program, and examined the plan and

activities to be implemented throughout the process, under the direction of technicians and the mentor school principals. Also at this first technical meeting, a small diagnostic test was administered to each participant. These tests made it possible to determine each candidate's level of knowledge in the Learn, Practice, Apply model (APA, *Aprendo, Practico y Aplico*) and in components of the Project pedagogical approach.

According to test results, most participants demonstrated a command of the pedagogical model; candidates needing most reinforcement were those whose schools had been added to the Project network this year.

A total of 1,199 people (822 women and 377 men) participated in the two technical meetings. The following tables show participation in the two technical meetings in the different departments.

Table No.1: Participants in the First Technical Meeting of the Specialization Process, by Department and Gender

Activity	Department	Participants		
		Female	Male	TOTAL
<i>First Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Meeting</i>	Carazo	26	8	34
	Rivas	18	14	32
	Jinotega	29	10	39
	Matagalpa	22	24	46
	Granada	19	5	24
	RAAS (ZC)	13	7	20
	Río San Juan	13	11	24
	León	33	9	42
	Masaya	19	7	26
	Estelí	28	7	35
	Chinandega	43	13	56
	Chontales	18	4	22
	Boaco	25	10	35
	Madriz	25	10	35
	Nueva Segovia	15	19	34
	Managua	48	27	75
	TOTAL	394	185	579

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

Table No. 2: Participants in the Second Technical Meeting of the Specialization Process, by Department and Gender

Activity	Department	Participants		
		Female	Male	TOTAL
Second Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Meeting	Carazo	17	17	34
	Rivas	40	15	55
	Jinotega	31	9	40
	Matagalpa	20	22	42
	Granada	24	8	32
	RAAS (ZC)	9	8	17
	Río San Juan	14	11	25
	León	39	10	49
	Masaya	24	9	33
	Estelí	22	8	30
	Chinandega	49	10	59
	Chontales	26	11	37
	Boaco	20	5	25
	Madriz	33	14	47
	Nueva Segovia	29	25	54
	Managua	31	10	41
	TOTAL	428	192	620

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

Participants reported to have learned the following at the technical meetings:

- Strategies for sustainability of the EXCELENCIA/USAID Project approach.
- The responsibility involved in being a Master Teachers.
- Refreshed and reinforced knowledge of APA methodology.
- The profile of the Master Teacher.
- How to assess using a diagnostic test.
- How to prepare Social Studies material.
- How to schedule group activities.

2. Experience exchanges

As part of the specialization process, candidates participated in and facilitated experience exchanges among teachers, parents and students. These exchanges put forth the following objectives:

- To strengthen integration of the educational community, for effective participation in school activities.
- To analyze, promote action and foster commitment to improved functioning of mentor and satellite school organizations.

The experience exchanges were held in the Pacific and coordinated by principals of the 316 mentoring schools in that region. Departmental and municipal MINED advisors and Project facilitators visited the exchanges to provide monitoring and assistance -- in 15 departments during a first round, and in six departments during a second.

The following table describes participants in these experience exchanges, by department and by gender.

Table No. 3: Participants in Experience Exchanges, by Department and Gender

Department	Participants		
	Female	Male	TOTAL
Carazo	19	6	25
Rivas	24	8	32
Jinotega	12	7	19
Matagalpa	17	12	29
Granada	19	4	23
RAAS (ZC)	19	7	26
Río San Juan	11	11	22
León	14	7	21
Masaya	17	8	25
Estelí	21	3	24
Chinandega	36	8	44
Chontales y Boaco *	16	6	22
Madriz	29	21	50
Nueva Segovia	25	1	26
Managua	16	4	20
TOTAL	295	113	408

* Boaco and Chontales held one regional event.

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

The most important result of the experience exchanges was that they motivated participants to actively work in parent and student organizations, and to aid in consolidation of school organizations through parent support.

3. Professional development gathering with technical staff from the National Office on Primary Education

The third gathering of technical staff from MINED’s Office on Primary Education and EXCELENCIA/USAID facilitators was held on December 21, with 23 participants. The gathering explored the following topics: planning and evaluation based on the practice of the Office on Primary Education; evaluation of work this year between the Office on Primary Education and the Project; and presentation of the “school passport” and its ministerial accord. This “passport” is a new follow-up strategy for students who, for various reasons, have a temporary or permanent change of address over the course of the school year.

Participants considered the gathering to be a great success, particularly because of the integration of the Project and Office on Primary Education teams in all 2009 activities. It was suggested that this type of gathering be continued next year, as it serves to boost technical staff from both the Office on Primary Education and the Project, as well as to establish common criteria, opinions and work techniques for teacher training.

The Director of Primary Education, Professor Guillermo López, expressed his appreciation for support from the EXCELENCIA/USAID technical team, and acknowledged its high level of quality.

4. Local workshops with third and sixth grade teachers.

These workshops were held in all mentor schools of the Pacific region, with participation from 5,913 people (4,632 women and 1,281 men).

The workshops addressed preparation, use and management of social studies instructional materials. Teachers participating in the workshops followed a learning guide prepared by the Project facilitator team, containing two broad subjects: Social Studies and Hurricanes in Nicaragua. As product and proof of the teachers' work, materials were developed in each workshop, such as: maps using the grid technique, semantic maps, timelines, time zone discs, etc.

The team of Project facilitators, together with candidates from the Master Teachers program, observed some of the workshops. The following achievements were noted at those sessions:

- Teachers considered this type of training to be very useful for their work and reported that their expectations had been met.
- Teachers committed to applying what they had learned to their classrooms.
- Principals asked their teachers to continue applying the EXCELENCIA/USAID pedagogical approach after the Project ends.
- Teachers understood the importance of having a greater scientific command of curriculum areas, for improved educational quality.

Overall, participation in these workshops was excellent and spontaneous. Sessions were conducted in a climate of trust and great willingness to work. By using the learning guide, teachers were able to see for themselves how to learn by doing.

During the Project's training sessions, participants in the Master Teachers specialization program were given the opportunity to put content into practice, and to learn how to prepare learning guides to teach curriculum subjects in the classroom.

The following table shows third and sixth grade workshop participants, by department and gender.

Table No. 4: Participants in Third and Sixth Grade Workshops

Department	Participants		
	Female	Male	TOTAL
Carazo	209	61	270
Rivas	265	67	332
Jinotega	245	77	322
Matagalpa	521	191	712
Granada	225	73	298
RAAS (ZC)	114	28	142
Río San Juan	198	81	279
León	470	74	544
Masaya	243	87	330
Estelí	200	51	251
Chinandega	429	106	535
Chontales	208	34	242
Boaco	173	34	207
Madriz	300	101	401
Nueva Segovia	340	80	420
Managua	492	136	628
TOTAL	4,632	1,281	5,913

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

5. Regional and departmental workshops on pedagogical components with selected schools

Workshops were conducted in 150 selected EXCELENCIA /USAID network schools, from November 16th to 24th.

These workshops made it possible not only to train candidates in the Master Teachers program, but also to assess participating schools' command of the Project's APA (Learn, Practice, Apply) approach. Component reinforcement strategies were later implemented based on this assessment. During the workshops, different schools' experiences applying the pedagogical components were presented and exchanged. Schools that were having difficulty applying the components resolved to overcome these limitations and to work towards their increasingly more effective application. Candidates of the Master Teachers program, for their part, committed to monitor development of pedagogical components in participating schools.

The following obstacles, among others, were identified at these workshops:

- Some teachers are not sufficiently familiar with the pedagogical components.
- More training and updates are needed on classroom application of the pedagogical components.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the following measures will be adopted:

- Duplication of these workshops in all of the regions.

- Recommend to every school's Board of Directors that refresher trainings on pedagogical components and APA be provided to their school's entire educational community.

The following table shows participation in workshops, by department and gender.

Table No. 5: Participation in Workshops on the Pedagogical Components, by Department and Gender

Department	Participants		
	Female	Male	TOTAL
Carazo	12	7	19
Rivas	23	4	27
Jinotega	50	8	58
Matagalpa	28	16	44
Granada	13	2	15
RAAS (ZC)	18	3	21
Río San Juan	21	2	23
León	13	2	15
Masaya	9	2	11
Estelí	18	3	21
Chinandega	28	2	30
Chontales	18	2	20
Boaco	18	2	20
Madriz	24	12	36
Nueva Segovia	24	7	31
Managua	24	5	29
TOTAL	341	79	420

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

6. Visits by candidates of the Master Teachers specialization program

During this quarter, 512 candidates of the Master Teachers specialization program conducted rounds of visits to schools in their areas to promote and monitor application of pedagogical components. Program candidates conducted a total of 2,133 visits this quarter, as shown in the following table.

Table No. 6: Visits Conducted by Master Teacher Candidates, this Quarter

Department	Number of Visits
León	164
Masaya	97
Jinotega	169
Matagalpa	169
Granada	96
Río San Juan	74
RAAS (Zelaya Central)	39
Carazo	112
Rivas	150
Managua	50
Boaco	68
Chontales	97
Chinandega	255
Estelí	145
Nueva Segovia	253
Madriz	195
TOTAL	2,133

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

The most important result of these visits was that EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools were motivated to implement all activities scheduled this quarter; this despite MINED's various pending tasks and the many other responsibilities network schools had during this time.

Other Training Activities

1. Regional workshops on preparation of instructional materials

In support of the Office on Primary Education, Project technicians conducted regional workshops on "Preparing Instructional Materials with available Resources in Your Environment." At these workshops, materials were developed for Language and Literature and for Mathematics (Problem Solving). Expositions of the created materials were organized and visited by groups of representatives from each municipality. The following table shows these workshops by department and number of participants.

Table No. 7: Material Preparation Workshops by Department and Number of Participants

Department	Date	Participants
Estelí	October 19, 20 & 21	131
Chinandega	October 28	120
Managua	November 10, 11 & 12	120
	TOTAL	371

Source: Project EXCELENCIA/USAID. December 2009

2. Second National Read Aloud Contest

As part of its approach to effective learning in reading and writing in the early grades, the Project supported MINED in organizing and conducting the “Second National Read Aloud Contest” at the departmental level. Project facilitators participated as members of different departmental assessment juries. The national finals of the contest were held on November 6th in the MINED auditorium, with attendance from representatives from each of the country’s departments. EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools stood out among the final winners; first place was awarded to a student from the Hermanas Álvarez Aguilar School (mentor school in the EXCELENCIA/USAID network, department of Boaco).

3. Visits by facilitators to MINED delegations and to mentor schools

A total of 205 visits were conducted by Project facilitators during this quarter to coordinate actions with local authorities and to provide support to mentor school principals and teachers. Ninety one of these visits were made to monitor and support workshops for candidates of the Master Teachers training program. The remaining 114 visits focused on classroom observation. These visits confirmed that by the end of the school year, most schools were applying the first grade projects, and their students had made successful gains in reading and writing.

Table No. 8: Visits Conducted by Project Facilitators this Quarter

Department	Number of Visits
León	8
Masaya	7
Jinotega	15
Matagalpa	20
Granada	14
Río San Juan	10
RAAS (Zelaya Central)	8
Carazo	11
Rivas	14
Managua	18
Boaco	10
Chontales	15
Chinandega	22
Estelí	14
Nueva Segovia	10
Madriz	09
Total	205

Fuente: Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. Diciembre 2009

Other Activities

Battle for Universal Basic Education

EXCELENCIA/USAID has supported MINED's new educational policy with implementation of four first grade projects in the mentor schools and in most neighboring schools. Information directly from the schools has shown greater rates of retention and passing in Project network schools, as compared to schools not in the network.

The Project has provided effective support to teachers in the early grades through local authorities, departmental and municipal technicians, and facilitators. This has enabled clarification of any questions concerning application of reading and writing projects. Facilitators conducted assessments with a random sampling of early grades and were able to show successful learning results in reading and writing. Students working with first grade projects promoted by the Project learn to read and write with fluency, and to analyze and express what they read and write in a logical manner.

- The Project accepted an invitation from MINED's departmental delegations of Chinandega and Estelí to participate in the development of the Ten-Year Educational Plan.
- The Project also supported MINED's Office on Primary Education by visiting selected schools and conducting surveys in their first grade classrooms. Survey results will be included in a report on the Central American region. Following are the schools visited for this purpose:

Department	Municipality	Polled Schools
Managua	Ciudad Sandino	San Luis
	San Rafael del Sur	Ricardo Morales Avilés
	Managua	La Libertad
	Managua	Benito Juárez
	Villa el Carmen	Gustavo Carrión

- During the week of October 26-30, Project representatives participated in the committee preparing the report on the "Regional Multigrade Education Forum," an event which was held in conjunction with the Office on Primary Education.
- Throughout the quarter, Project representatives participated in the committee preparing a "Manual for the Quality and Equality in Primary Education Model." Progress has been made in developing a preliminary proposal for this manual.

II. Result No. 2: Student achievement tests in the areas of Language arts and Math developed, using state-of-the-art methodologies, comparability results of prior years testing, and producing quantitative and qualitative data.

A) 2009 Annual Study

a) Organizational Phase

1. A workshop was conducted for translation and cultural adjustment of the Math test for EIB schools that are participating in the 2009 Annual Study and for schools that teach in the indigenous languages of Miskito and Mayangna in the RAAN and in Creole in the RAAS. The workshop included participation from teachers and technical specialists from both the RAAN and the RAAS.

2. All organizational, logistical and financial preparations were made for 2009 Annual Study field work:

- Temporary financial and logistical support staff was hired.
- A training workshop for field staff was held at IPADE.

b) Field Work Phase:

- 137 schools were visited, located in 55 municipalities throughout the country's 15 departments, including the RAAN and RAAS.
- Between Spanish and Math, 8,600 total tests were administered to a total of 4,300 students.
- 170 teachers and 130 principals from participating schools were interviewed.
- A total of 63 people participated in field data collection: 9 supervisors, 43 field technicians, two coordinators and nine drivers.
- Staff from the areas of finance, administration, human resources and project management all gave their full support to the effort.

During the second week of field work, Hurricane Ida hit the Caribbean Coast, creating difficulties in completing work in the municipalities of Triángulo Minero, Waspán and Puerto Cabezas in the RAAN, as well as one school in the Laguna de Perlas sector of the RAAS. Work was eventually completed. Only in two schools of the Puerto Cabezas region was it not possible to use the data collection tools, due to the urgent evacuation of the field team because of the hurricane.

c) Data Entry

Entry of field data into specially designed databases is now complete. Steps to follow include cleaning, completing data by school, recoding variables, and then sending to AIR Washington for statistical analysis.

B) Formative Evaluation 2009

- Administration of the third phase of the Formative Evaluation in participating schools was coordinated with Component 4.

- The administered tests were received, and the database organized for entry of test data.
- Data entry into specially designed databases has been completed. Steps to follow include cleaning, completing information by school, and recoding variables. The processed information will then be sent to AIR/Washington for analysis.

III. Result No. 3: Multigrade intercultural bilingual educational materials finalized and presented in an art-ready copy for MINED's large scale printing.

In the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions, FADCANIC has continued to work on consolidating use of the pedagogical components in the schools it serves. At the same time, it has worked on validating the Bilingual Intercultural Education materials, for their finalization and submission to MINED.

A) Production of Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) materials

Production of EIB materials has followed guidelines of the SEAR curriculum and national authorities. The third and fourth grade multigrade education learning guides that are already validated have been corrected by the Project's linguistic-technical teams. At the same time, fifth and sixth grade multigrade education learning guides underwent validation in 21 selected multigrade schools: nine schools from three municipalities of the RAAS, and 12 schools from five municipalities in the RAAN.

Five validation tools were used in each of the schools with teachers, students, educational authorities, and parents.

Table No. 9: Production of EIB Materials by FADCANIC

Student Learning Guides with Corresponding Teacher's Guides		Validated		Corrected		Digitalized		Electronic Product	
		2008	Oct. 2009	Oct/Nov. 2009	Nov/Dec. 2009	Nov/Dec. 2009	Dec/Jan. 2009/10	January 2010	
AREA: Language and communication. Third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade native languages.									
1	Miskito language text	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
1	Teacher's manual	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
2	Panamahka language text	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
2	Teacher's manual	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
3	Twahka language text		5 th & 6 th						
3	Teacher's manual		5 th & 6 th						
Text Units								8	12
AREA: Language and communication. Fifth and sixth grade second languages.									
4	L2 English	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
4	Teacher's manual	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
5	Spanish for Creole speakers	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
5	Teacher's manual	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
6	Spanish for Panamahka, Twahka and Miskito speakers	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
6	Teacher's manual	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th	3 rd & 4 th	5 th & 6 th
Text Units								12	12

Source: FADCANIC, December 2009

- FADCANIC technical staff monitored validation processes in 12 multigrade schools of the RAN and nine of the RAAS.
- Validation technicians used the five validation tools in the 21 schools with teachers, students, educational authorities, and parents.
- The Project's technical staff in each region, together with MINED technical staff, monitored the validation process. Two observation and pedagogical-technical assistance visits were made to each school over a period of six weeks.
- FADCANIC technical staff also conducted an initial awareness-raising and training activity in schools regarding the instructional material validation process.
- FADCANIC coordinated all of its activities with MINED municipal delegations and with the Education Secretariat of the SEAR.
- As planned, validation activities lasted six weeks, from October 1st to November 14th, 2009.
- In October and November, while fifth and sixth grade products were undergoing validation, third and fourth grade multigrade learning guides were corrected.
- In November, entry of third and fourth grade corrections into electronic files began. This work is done by Spanish, English, Miskito and Mayangna language typists.
- Once all corrections have been entered, the files will move to a final layout and

artistic design phase in the FADCANIC central offices of Managua.

B) Reinforcement and Consolidation of the Work of the Network Schools

1. Training

Table No. 10: Training Activities by Municipality, Date and Participant Gender

MUNICIPALITY	ACTIVITY	DATE	F	M	TOTAL
Bluefields	Regional EIB workshop on Spanish as a second language for speakers of Creole, Miskito, Mayangna and Rama.	October 5 and 6, 2009	24	10	34
Puerto Cabezas Rosita Siuna Bonanza Waspmam	Work sessions in 12 schools with principals, teachers, students and parents from a total of 14 multigrade schools, in order to guide and organize validation of educational materials.	First week of October 2009	125	67	192
TOTALS			149	77	226

Source: FADCANIC, December 2009

2. Visits to network schools for follow-up, monitoring and technical support

Table No. 11: Support Visits to Schools in the Validation Sample this Quarter

Region	Municipalities	No. of visits	No. of trained teachers
RAAN	5	24	16
RAAS	3	18	9
Totales	8	42	25

Source: FADCANIC, December 2009

Table No. 12: Classroom visits in the schools with pedagogical and technical support for teachers

Municipalities	No. of schools	No. of trained teachers		
		Female	Male	Total
Rosita	3	0	3	3
Bonanza	3	1	2	3
Siuna	2	4	2	6
Puerto Cabezas	2	1	1	2
Waspam	2	1	1	2
Kukrahill	3	1	2	3
Pearl Lagoon	4	2	2	4
Desembocadura	2	1	1	2
TOTAL	21	11	14	25

Source: FADCANIC, December 2009

Monitoring and technical visits this quarter centered on validation of fifth and sixth grade multigrade educational materials in nine schools of the RAAS and in 12 schools of the RAAN. Two visits were made to each school, during which learning guides and corresponding teacher's manuals were validated. The Project worked directly with the teachers involved, to assist them in using the instructional materials under validation, while at the same time conducting the validation interviews with these teachers.

3. APA strategy implementation in schools visited

During validation of the student learning guides and teacher's manuals, the Project monitored teacher and student performance when using the instructional materials under validation, observing and assisting both teachers and students in APA strategy steps and stages.

Main Achievements through this Activity

- The regional EIB reinforcement workshop held in Bluefields was facilitated by the general coordinator of the Project. With support from the technical staff in the RAAS, the coordinator guided participants in using the three self-study modules for improving their skills in Spanish, which they already speak as a second language.
- Participants made good use of the contents of the three Spanish L2 self-study modules. Each received a set of materials with which to practice exercises in the modules and improve their skills in Spanish, which they speak as a second language.
- Active and creative involvement of participants throughout the entire workshop was evident by positive interactions.

- Creativity in preparing instructional materials and corresponding presentations were observed.
- Participants became familiar with the self-study materials for L1 and L2 development, and acquired technical knowledge for proper use of materials in Spanish as L2.
- The Project prepared an assessment and description of the overall physical and pedagogical conditions of each RAAS school served by EXCELENCIA at the beginning of the school year. This quarter, these reports were updated to include final results obtained in each of the 42 project beneficiary schools.
- A workshop primarily with teachers, as well as with students, MINED municipal authorities, and parents. Participants were trained in the validation process for fifth and sixth grade instruction materials.
- Teachers from all multigrade schools under validation were trained specifically in using the student learning guides and corresponding teacher's manuals.
- Instruction received by teachers and principals has positively impacted student performance.
- Student use of prior knowledge has increasingly improved in multigrade schools and in regular and multigrade mentor schools.

Other Activities

- FADCANIC's "Study of the Impact of the Second Year of EXCELENCIA/USAID Project Implementation" (*"Sistematización sobre el Impacto del Segundo Año de Ejecución del Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID"*) is currently in the design and layout phase, including insertion of photos.
- FADCANIC's "Monitoring and Evaluation Report of the Third Year of Project Implementation in the Autonomous Regions" (*"Informe de Monitoreo y Evaluación del Tercer Año de Ejecución del Proyecto en las Regiones Autónomas"*) has been completed.

Construction Component

- Awareness-raising and information-sharing meetings were held with community committees to address progress in the schools that were constructed.
- Support and awareness-raising visits were made to teachers and principals in the Hna. Teresa de Jesús Rosales and Teodoro Rivera schools, to address maintenance of the new schools, bathrooms, wells, etc.
- Work meetings were held with the EXCELENCIA /FADCANIC general coordinating committee and the regional technical team.

IV. Result No. 4. A multi-grade trainer pre-service teacher training curriculum fully developed.

1. National Gathering

“Sharing our Best Practices to Attain Educational Excellence”

The gathering was held October 28th and 29th, 2009 at PAEBANIC in Managua, with a total of 68 participants, including coordinators, facilitators and technicians from the seven NGOs, EXCELENCIA partner NGOs, and representation from principals, teachers, student organizations and special guests. A final report was produced consolidating the experience as well as a summary DVD, and a detailed DVD of each Pedagogical Component.

Objectives of the National Gathering

- To share progress and results in the use of pedagogical components and APA methodological strategies in mentor and satellite schools served by NGOs, FBOs and Component 4 of the EXCELENCIA Project.



- To encourage and facilitate the continued application of APA strategies and pedagogical components in mentor and satellite schools of the EXCELENCIA Project – Component 4 beyond the official end of the project.

Results

- NGOs and FBOs identified and shared successes, progress, strengths and obstacles encountered in the application of the pedagogical components in the schools during a nearly two-year process with the active involvement of principals, teachers, parents, students, technical staff and coordinators.

- Participants acknowledged and reflected upon those strategies that have allowed for greater development of the pedagogical components and the APA methodology in NGO- and FBO- managed mentor and satellite schools.



- Participants shared in a climate of cordial communication, trust, and exchange of teaching resources and materials. These materials have been adjusted and used to raise awareness and encourage the active involvement of teachers and students in the classroom, as well as parents in schoolwork.

-In attendance at the event were representatives of USAID, MINED and of other NGOs or institutions such as the Peace Corps, the Fabretto Children’s Foundation, CARE, Alianzas, Eduquemos, and Save the Children. Representatives came to learn about and share the progress of NGOs served by the EXCELENCIA/USAID Project.

- Participants noted the very good work that had been carried out with the schools over the last two years, thanks to the active participation, team work, enthusiasm and motivation of the NGOs, with regard to pedagogical components, APA, and first grade projects. For example, parents of the Vicariato de Bluefields thanked the EXCELENCIA Project for including them and for facilitating funding and training technical staff to guide them and to awaken their sense of responsibility and spirit of participation.

Future challenges identified:

- Expand the pedagogical components and APA methodology to other neighboring schools.
- Strengthen the sustainability plan to support teachers in the application of the APA methodology.
- Implement active strategies with the first grade projects.
- Achieve active participation and involvement in library organization, use and management to reinforce a love of reading and research among students and teachers and thereby strengthen skills in these areas.
- Increase leadership from student organizations and parents in classroom processes and schoolwork.
- Promote planning and organization that addresses the educational needs of students and schools.
- Negotiate with other organizations or institutions to secure teaching materials and spendable supplies.



2. Experience Exchange in Rural Education

“There can be No Community Development without Quality Education”

This event was held on November 19-20 at the “Fe y Alegría”-La Asunción Experimental Center’s Normal School in the Lecheguagos (el NER) district, eight kilometers east of Posada del Sol, sector Hermita León. In attendance were three members of each teacher training college – the director, a teacher in practice, and a pre-service teacher in his or her final year of training. The Professionalization Group Coordinator from MINED’s National Office on Teacher Training also attended. A total of 154 people participated.



Purpose: To share experiences related to the Lecheguagos Normal School’s advanced technical degree with public teacher training colleges (i.e. normal schools) from around the country.



- NER Director, Rodrigo Sandoval, presented the history and origins of the Lecheguagos Normal School, as well as community organization for improvement projects such as potable water, a health center, and a community store, to name a few. He described progress made in the organization of multigrade and regular type schools around NER as a true educational core group with good school-community relations and communication.

- Reflections and comments were exchanged through three simultaneous group presentations on the following topics:

- The APA experience in primary schools, led by Mario Méndez.
- Using CRA and CRE resource centers to teach, led by Marlene Pichardo.
- The “Rural Multigrade Experience” advanced technical degree, led by Josefina Vijil.

Experiences were shared in use and management of instructional materials, as well as in use of audiovisual materials through a fair in which students and teachers presented projects on agriculture, self-esteem, a photography session, video, and CRA math resource centers.



Achievements:

- Ideas were exchanged in an environment of respect and trust among Advanced Technical degree and teacher training college directors, teachers and students from around the county, as well as Ministry of Education representatives.

- The MINED representative, Ms. Nidia Mejía, has offered her support for the validation of the Lecheguagos Normal School curriculum with a group of teachers who have been involved in professional development.

- Participants reflected on the experience of the Advanced Technical Institute curriculum and educational core groups.



- Representatives from the visiting teacher colleges shared feedback on the time and basic subjects needed to pursue the Advanced Technical degree and suggested that other necessary workshops be offered to future teachers of these areas. They also acknowledged the organized community outreach work of the Normal School team.

- At another time, participants would like to review the curriculum documents in greater detail, in order to suggest additional elements that could strengthen the Advanced Technical curriculum.

- Strategies were shared with MINED, contributing key elements for the future training of teachers who work with multiple grades in rural multigrade schools.

Other Trainings:

In October, eight trainings were held on the pedagogical components: one by the Moravian Church, two by Fundación León 2000, four by the Vicariato de Bluefields, and one by Fe y Alegría.

The Nehemiah Center, ALISTAR and FADCANIC conducted Quality Circles in the schools in response to needs expressed by teachers. The NGOs did not hold workshops in the months of November and December because schools were engaged in closing activities for the 2009 school year.

Formative Evaluation Administered in Spanish and Math, Phase Three

Spanish and Math test instruments were delivered to third grade teachers of the 23 schools administering phase three of the formative evaluation tests. These tests were monitored and then submitted, in coordination with NGOs served by Component 4 and the Evaluation Component.

Financial Meeting with NGOs

A meeting was held with NGOs on financial and technical closure, with 14 representatives of the Bluefields Vicariate, the Nehemiah Center, Fundación León 2000, Alistar, Fe y Alegría, and FADCANIC.

The meeting addressed financial aspects of Component 4 closure, such as management and use of documents sent to NGOs, safekeeping of accounting files, the fixed assets register format, bank account closing procedure, and the official format for detailing exempt purchases. Technical concerns related to receipt of final products were also addressed, and questions from NGOs were answered. Fundación León 2000 and the Nehemiah Center submitted partial reporting; information from the other NGOs is still pending.

Closing Activities with NGOs

- Preparation and submission to NGOs of indicator tools for determining most important items to be included in each of their final reports; specific guides and dates for filling out and submitting description and self-evaluation formats; communication and submission of tools for reporting the status and functioning of CRE resource center items.
- Communication and monitoring, and support visits to coordinators and facilitators concerning submission of products.
- Visits to the central offices of Fe y Alegría, Fundación León 2000, the Vicariato de Bluefields, and the Centro Nehemias, for clarification of questions related to final products.

Support for National Gatherings

- Communication and support to NGO coordinators and facilitators for organization of the gathering entitled, "Sharing our Best Practices to Attain Educational Excellence."

- Technical meetings with every NGO concerning presentation of the pedagogical components assigned to each of them in the “Sharing our Best Practices to Attain Educational Excellence” gathering.
- Communication with MINED and teacher training colleges throughout the country to ensure attendance at the gathering of teacher training colleges.
- Administrative and financial management to support the final experience exchange gathering as well as the national teacher training college gathering held in Lechecuagos.
- Technical meetings with the Advanced Technical team to organize the experience exchange among teacher training colleges.

Visits

- Visit with Ms. Alicia Slate of USAID to Rama and Nueva Guinea schools managed by the Vicariato de Bluefields, to assess their progress in the pedagogical components and the APA methodological strategy.
- Visit from Ms. Janet Ballantyne, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Connie Johnson and Alicia Slate of USAID, and José Ignacio Mata, EXCELENCIA Chief of Party, to share the experiences of Component 4, and the Centro Nehemias in working to support education. EXCELENCIA Project progress was presented. Likewise, testimonies of work with mentor schools were shared by Mr. Daniel Boniche, director of the Nehemiah Center; Mr. Daniel Aragón, advisor; Gloria Boniche, facilitator; Bautista Betania, school principal; Ruth Rivera; and Janet Hernández, first grade teacher at the Centro de Fe Vida Nueva. The meeting was held at the Nehemiah Center on December 16th, 2009.
- Preparation of a qualitative and quantitative report on school visits by Component 4 coordinators. Ensuing analyses resulted in sustainability proposals, such as:
 - Support for teachers in classroom processes through visits and quality circles.
 - Dissemination of CRA resource center experiences and knowledge to satellite schools and communities.
 - Take steps to assure maintenance and utilization of CRA resource center materials and equipment.
 - Strengthen classroom instructional planning with the learning guides.
 - Utilize the bibliography to promote research and the habit of reading among teachers and students.

Sharing Experiences with Other NGOs

- Exchange of experiences in first grade reading comprehension assessments, with participation from Dra. Vanessa Castro of CIASES.
- Attendance at the EDUQUEMOS forum on the state of education in Nicaragua.

Final report and submission of products on CD and hard copy, according to Component 4 closing matrix

V. Activities Planned for Next Quarter

Next quarter will be the last in Project implementation. Technical activities will conclude at the end of February, leaving March for finalizing administrative aspects and submitting final products. Technical staff contracts will gradually come to an end during the month of February, with some technical staff on board through March 5th. A few administrative staff members will also remain in March to handle finances and accounting until the Project ends.

Under Result 1, training activities planned for the specialization program will continue. A closing event and graduation for Master Teachers who pass assessment requirements is also planned, with presentation of diplomas and certifications.

A final delivery of materials will be made to network schools during the last quarter. This will include programmed materials as well as donations from the American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF), negotiated by Project administrators.

Lastly, mentor schools of the EXCELENCIA/USAID network will be presented with an identifying plaque, stating that they have received support from USAID in application of the educational quality and equality approach.

Under Result 2, data analysis will be consolidated and remaining reports on studies will be produced and distributed.

Under Result 3, FADCANIC will conclude validation and final editing of fifth and sixth grade primary multigrade EIB materials. It will then submit these materials to regional educational authorities and to MINED.

Under Result 4, design of the teacher training curriculum for the multigrade specialization will be finalized. It will then be put into practice by current teachers of the EXCELENCIA/USAID network multigrade schools. During this practice, the Project will visit these teachers and invite them to a meeting to learn about and evaluate their experiences. In addition, a final delivery of materials and books for the mini libraries donated from EXCELENCIA partner American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF) will be made to the schools.

Under the Construction Component, the rehabilitated and constructed schools in the RAAN will be officially inaugurated.

In general, and as part of Project closing, products outlined in the Project's Cooperative Agreement will be submitted to USAID. Project equipment will be distributed to the NGOs and to MINED according to a proposed disposition plan, to be presented for USAID approval.