

PROJECT 522-0119
RURAL EDUCATION

PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

I. Introduction and Background:

The purposes of this project were to: (1) establish an educational management system within the MOE with a proven capacity to design, develop, test and deliver improved curricula and instructional materials, and to train rural primary teachers in their use; and (2) establish a full-fledged Central/Satellite School system in six Departments of the North Coast of Honduras in conjunction with the Rural Reconstruction II Project (522-V-031) which terminated on September 30, 1981. The total amount authorized and disbursed under this project was \$750,000. The Project was authorized on August 25, 1978 and the PACD was April 30, 1983.

The logical framework matrix for the Project, included as an annex to the Project Paper, specifies the following as end-of-project conditions:

1. 307 Central/Satellite schools have new educational materials in four subject matter areas, i.e., math, natural sciences, vocational education and language arts, for the six primary grades, designed and produced by the new education management system.
2. 915 teachers, 60 school directors and 42 supervisors, have been trained in and are applying new methodologies and materials.
3. Training and materials production will have begun for at least one additional area where Central/Satellite or nuclear schools exist.

Included in the log frame are the three following outputs:

1. An integrated system for continuous curriculum and materials design, teacher training, supervision, and evaluation.
2. Improved materials production center.
3. Improved information system.

During its four and a half year life, the Project witnessed three changes in Government and four changes in Ministers of Education. The Honduran economy went into a tailspin midway into Project implementation (from a 6.8% annual growth rate in 1979 to a -1.2% annual growth rate in 1982). Between August of 1980 and January of 1982 the Honduran people were governed by a transitional GOH coalition which filled the gap between a Military Junta and a government run by a constitutionally elected President. This was a highly political period and one which came at a crucial moment in Project implementation. During this period the Honduran teachers' unions, already highly politicized and with a strong say in the operations of the Ministry of Education, gained even more power. The operating budget of the Ministry and, concurrently, the counterpart set aside for the Project, was hit hard; and the MOE administrative apparatus - already weak - deteriorated considerably.

The net result of the above, plus other constraints to be described further below, was very detrimental to the Project in general and, in particular, the portion that had to do with the education management system. Implementation targets were not met as planned and only a small portion of the Project objectives were achieved. The only aspect that managed to escape being affected by the constraints identified above was the information system (Output 3 on the log frame). This in part was due to the nature of the activity (the installation of an information system is, by definition, a highly technical activity and less subject to political stresses); in part to when it began (this activity did not really move into full swing until after the Presidential elections); and in part to the way in which it has been managed (many lessons learned under the rest of the Project were taken into consideration in designing and implementing this portion of the Project).

The rest of the Project, although far from meeting proposed objectives, has had some positive features. Through it the Mission has learned a number of lessons that it has applied in subsequent Project design and which are being applied in Project implementation with the MOE.

The remainder of this report is divided into five Sections. Section II summarizes Project inputs; Section III provides the reader with a brief review of Project accomplishments and summarizes its current status; Section IV goes into further depth on constraints to successful Project implementation and describes attempts made, both on the part of the GOH and AID to overcome these constraints; Section V describes Project evaluations carried out and attempts, on the part of A.I.D., to rectify problems; and Section VI provides a summary of lessons learned.

II, Project Inputs:

At the time the agreement was signed with the GOH, the Project called for a total of \$750,000 in A.I.D. Grant funds and \$1,450,000 in GOH counterpart funds. Additional support for the Project also came from the World Bank which, under a larger loan, provided a full-time curriculum advisor for two years who was incorporated along with the A.I.D. funded advisors, funds for carrying out two curriculum development workshops, and funds for reproducing the revised curricula. Other smaller and more indirect inputs came from the Swiss Government and UNESCO.

At the time of drafting this document the only fully accurate summary available of inputs are A.I.D. inputs. They are as follows:

<u>Nature of Assistance</u>	<u>Amount</u>	
<u>Technical Assistance:</u>		
. Educational Administration Specialist	\$96,860	
. Education Research & Evaluation Specialist	53,400	
. Curriculum Specialist	42,000	
. Educational Technology Specialist	111,900	
. Short term T.A. (various)	24,660	
Subtotal		\$328,820
<u>Training:</u>		
. Two Masters degrees in Educational Supervision & Administration at the UNM	30,800	
. Other (observation travel, travel to conference)	2,460	
Subtotal		33,260
<u>Educational Technology Materials & Supplies</u>		
. Composer	18,390	
. Offset press and attachments	21,000	
. Silkscreen materials	1,925	
. Videocamera & recorder	4,350	
. Taperecorders, tapes, and tape duplicator	4,335	
. Other (paper and ink for reproducing student workbooks and teachers guides)	3,475	
. Contract to develop educational materials	51,625	
Subtotal		105,100

Computer equipment and supplies:

WANG VS Minicomputer with terminals,
and printers 217,720

MOE Support (temporary salaries for staff
of curriculum and evaluation units and for
MOE Project Coordinator) 65,100

TOTAL A.I.D. INPUTS: \$750,000

GOH inputs were severely curtailed by the sharp economic recession that began in 1980. The Mission has been unable to obtain a detailed breakdown of the exact monetary nature of these inputs, although clearly during the peak year of the Project (1981) the GOH invested significant amounts in salary, travel, and per diem expenses.

III. Project Accomplishments and Current Status:

Viewed in terms of the end-of-project status (EOPS) indicators and the outputs (see Section I), the accomplishments of this Project have fallen far short of desired targets. None of the EOPS were achieved; one output was partially achieved (# 1), one was achieved in a satisfactory fashion (# 2), and one was not achieved at all (# 3).

Outlined below is a list of the accomplishments with regard to Output 3 - the improved information system - and a summary of what has been accomplished in partial fulfillment of Output 1 - a continuous system for integrated curriculum and materials development.

A. Output 3: Improved Information System

Progress in institutionalizing a Management Information System (MIS) in the MOE has been slow but steady. Since December of 1981 when a WANG VS computer was purchased with Project funds and installed at the MOE, an Information Systems Department has been formally created in the MOE; six MOE staff have received training in computer programming; and new positions for the Information Systems Coordinator, the Chief of the Computer Unit, and six programmers have been created. The MOE annual statistics, up until recently tabulated manually and taking two to three years to be prepared out, are being produced within approximately six months.

On July 31, 1983 A.I.D. and the MOE signed a \$650,000 grant to provide for an eighteen month continuation of this activity, now a fifth component under the ongoing Rural Primary Education Loan. The activity has the full support of the Minister and the Vice-Minister of Education for Technical Affairs and is seen by the current administration as one of its "success stories". Pending progress toward accomplishing Project objectives during this second phase, A.I.D. and the MOE may agree to enter into a third phase.

B. Output 1: Continuous System for Integrated Curriculum and Materials Development

At the time of the PACD the following had been accomplished under the Project:

- . With the assistance of a World Bank consultant, a revised curriculum for grades one through three had been developed; 9,500 copies of this curriculum had been printed and distributed to 200 schools in the frontier area of Honduras bordering El Salvador.
- . Student workbooks and teacher's guides for grade one through three had been developed; 9,500 sets had been printed and distributed to the same schools.
- . A draft revised curriculum for grades four through six had been developed and remained in draft.
- . Two individuals from the MOE had received training at the Master's level in Educational Supervision and Administration at the University of New Mexico.

As of the date of drafting this report, the revised curriculum and educational materials for grades one through three have been in use for approximately one year in the above mentioned schools. The World Bank financed the reproduction of the revised curricula and the MOE, with its own funds, financed the reproduction of the educational materials which were developed with Project funds. Responsibility for orienting the supervisors, directors, and teachers in the use of these materials and for providing training and follow-up has been vested in the In-Service Teacher Training Unit, currently being supported under the Rural Primary Education Project (522-0167). The World Bank and the Swiss Government, through other projects, are supporting per diem costs and travel expenses as well as the costs related to purchase and distribution of some related

materials. One of the two individuals financed with Project funds to receive a Master's degree in educational supervision and administration has assumed the coordination of the In-service Teacher Training Unit at the MOE and is doing an excellent job.

The experience, while positive in that at least the MOE made an attempt to follow-up and get some of the materials produced under the Project out to the field, has been somewhat less than successful. The in-service teacher trainers were given this as a last minute task in February of last year; were not adequately trained before going out into the field; and have apparently not been able to provide the orientation, training, and follow-up required. While there are no hard data, reports from the field indicate that a large portion of these materials have never even left their boxes.

The MOE, is still interested in carrying out a curricular reform for rural areas and in distributing educational materials. However, it has - to the Mission's knowledge - no money in the CY 1984 budget to continue with this experience. What will happen during the course of this year is unclear.

IV. Constraints to Achievement of Project objectives and attempts on the part of the MOE and AID to overcome these constraints:

Several key constraints have already been identified (see Section I) which, with the exception of the MIS activity, have had a major impact on Project implementation. With perhaps one exception (increasing politization of the teacher's unions), these are constraints that could not have been anticipated at the time the Project was designed. Nevertheless, when combined with the constraints identified below, the outcome is indeed somber.

Listed below are the key constraints to successful achievement of Project objectives that, in the opinion of the Project Officer, could have been avoided and definitely should be avoided in the future should this Mission, or for that matter, any Mission operating under similar circumstances, attempt to design a Project with similar objectives.

A. An overly ambitious Project design:

This was perhaps the key failing and represents the foremost constraint to successful Project implementation. The Project design called for carrying out, with \$750,000 in A.I.D. grant funds and \$1,450,000 in GOH counterpart funds over a four year time period, a task that - even under the most favorable of

circumstances - would take a minimum of seven to ten years to achieve with a budget in excess several times over that which was allotted under the Project.

Particularly unfortunate about the above was that this ambitious design and time frame put the MOE officials, the AID officers responsible for monitoring the Project, and the Project financed advisors under a tremendous amount of pressure to accomplish the impossible. This imposed a limitation so major that even resolution of the other constraints could not have permitted the Project to be carried out as planned.

The existence of an overly ambitious project design was identified as a key constraint in March of 1981, two and one half years into Project implementation, and attempts were made to reprogram the Project by toning it down and making it more realistic (a reprogramming document was developed and submitted to the MOE for approval in July of 1981). However, it was too late to rectify the situation as the impending Presidential election in November had rendered the Minister of Education powerless to make decisions on substantive matters.

B. Attempting to combine a highly technical activity with little flexibility in the time-frame for on-the-job training of MOE staff.

One of the key objectives of this Project was to use the curriculum experimentation as a vehicle for at the same time providing on-the-job training to MOE staff in the various elements involved in curriculum design, training, and evaluation. Given the highly technical nature of the actual experimentation (revising curricula, preparing educational materials, and preparing evaluation plans require high levels of technical expertise) and the very low level of training that the MOE personnel brought into the Project (most were primary teachers with little more than a highschool education), this created from the start a severe strain on implementation. Indeed, by the time the experimentation began, time frames were so limited that the MOE turned its attention to getting materials out into the field and put the training portion of the Project at a second echelon of priority.

Ideally, in retrospect, the first few years of the Project should have focused exclusively on training and, only when the MOE staff were at a suitable level in their training, should the experimental portion have been initiated.

C. Lack of a clear concept of what the Project was to accomplish.

A Project this complicated to implement, based on the assumption that rural students need a different educational treatment than urban students, and with the premise that it was to be carried out as a pilot experience, is highly vulnerable to changes in leadership.

To its major misfortune, this Project was developed under one regime and reflected the ideas of a Director General of Planning who, while the Project Paper was being approved in Washington in August of 1978, was along with the Minister removed from his position as part of an overall change in Government. The new Minister of Education and Director General of Planning did not share the interest or the philosophical point of view of their predecessors and were not interested in carrying this out as a pilot project. They attempted from the start to treat the Project as a massive materials production and distribution activity. This Minister and Director General were, in turn, substituted in August of 1980 by another Minister and Director General who, in addition to not being particularly interested in following through on the experimental focus of the Project, were victims of a highly politicized transitional period between a military junta and a constitutionally elected democratic government. With the entrance of the new government in January of 1982, these individuals were in turn replaced and the Project, firmly associated with the past regime, was put on hold as being "suspect".

Suffice to say, it is nearly impossible to carry out a Project with this type of design under such changing circumstances.

D. Low quality technical assistance and inability on the part of A.I.D. to adequately monitor this technical assistance and, with the exception of the Information Systems advisor, all of the T.A. was financed under host country contracts.

One of the major failings of this Project was that two of the key technical assistance positions (Educational Administration specialist and Research & Evaluation Specialist) were filled by persons who did not have the technical qualifications to carry out their roles. Both of the individuals hired for these positions were Hondurans and both held influential roles in one of the two major political parties running for election. One was hired under a two year contract; the other for three years.

By the time it came to the attention of both the Mission and the MOE that an error had been made in selecting these people for their roles (this occurred during the first year of the Project), the GOH had entered into a year of political transition. The MOE officials responsible for supervising these individuals (including the Minister himself) were, for political reasons, reticent to terminate their contracts and, for the same reason, unwilling or incapable of pulling them into line. Since both individuals were hired under host country contracts, A.I.D. had only the authority to suggest but not to impose changes (such as contract termination; reprimands to the consultants for going outside of the lines of their scopes of work). The A.I.D. Project Officer did, on a number of occasions, attempt to bring to the attention of upper level MOE authorities the need to bring these people into line and promises were given that strong actions would be taken. However, little or no follow-up was done.

E. Lack of coordination among the technical advisors and between the technical advisors and the MOE bureaucracy.

In part for the reasons identified above, and in part due to poor management, both within the technical advisory group and within the MOE, there were constant difficulties in communication. It was not unusual to have the educational technology advisor providing certain guidance to MOE staff only to have the evaluation advisor provide the same group with different guidance. This, plus the difficulties in communication among the MOE units themselves who were responsible for implementing the Project, created a number of circumstances in which there were complete communications breakdowns.

F. Too many actors involved in the implementation of the Project.

As specified in the its design, the Project was to bring together staff from the research unit, the statistics unit, the office of educational reform, the in-service teacher training unit, and from the office of materials production under one overall "education management system". In concept, this was a nice idea.

However, when combined with the problems with the consultants identified above plus the constant changes in the high echelons of the MOE bureaucracy what was a nice concept became a small nightmare. Getting the individuals from these units to

coordinate with each other was at times impossible. Having so many cooks often created tremendous delays in reaching agreement on basic elements of the curricular reform activity and, in turn, delays implementation significantly.

Given the experimental nature of this Project (materials had to be produced by certain dates in order to get them out to the field at the beginning of the school year; the in-service teacher trainers had to receive these materials and be trained in their use in time to get out to the field), this became a major constraint.

G. Lack of adequate administrative support:

Responsibility for administrative support for the Project was to have resided with the Directorate General of Planning. The administrator assigned to this office, for reasons never fully apparent to A.I.D., did not provide the necessary support. Countless field trips were delayed because per diem was not provided on time. This, in turn, produced major disruptions in implementation of the pilot experience. Staff salaries often were delayed months in being paid, thus producing severe demoralization among MOE staff assigned to the Project.

H. Major turnover in the composition of the in-service teacher training unit.

Key to the success of the Project was having a group of in-service teacher trainers who could play a key role both in the development of the educational materials and in the actual training of teachers in their use.

At the time the Project was approved in AID/Washington a very dynamic group of in-service teacher trainers (trained with A.I.D. funds from another project) was in place. However, and this could not have been foreseen, with the change in Minister in August of 1980 the majority of the individuals in this unit resigned. They were replaced during the months of January and May of 1981 with a heterogeneous group of people, not necessarily selected using the appropriate technical criteria. Delays in the incorporation of these people into the Unit during the early months of 1981, severe delays in receiving their initial paychecks (some waited as long as six months!), combined with the difficulties the advisors were having in "getting their act together", resulted in a motley group of individuals who - when they finally did go to the field - were ill prepared for the task they were charged to carry out.

VI. Project Evaluations carried out and attempts on the part of A.I.D. to rectify problems.

Two formal evaluations were carried out during the life of the Project: a mid-term evaluation in December of 1980 which assessed overall progress toward achieving Project objectives; and an evaluation in February of 1983 of the MIS component.

The mid-term evaluation came at a very convenient moment in Project implementation and provided the Mission with a number of insights on difficulties in Project implementation and several useful recommendations for overcoming these constraints. These insights and recommendations were taken seriously by the Mission and a number of attempts were made to rectify the situation, including a partial reprogramming carried out in January of 1981.

The evaluation of the MIS also was very useful to the Mission and served as a key element in the eventual decision taken to continue this activity by amending the Rural Primary Education loan to add a fifth component.

Another, less formal assessment was made of the Project situation in March/April of 1981 when a new A.I.D. Officer assumed responsibility for monitoring the Project. Based on her own observations of implementation status and using the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation, this Officer made a number of attempts to head off major deviations upon which the MOE had decided to embark. Among others, a reprogramming document was prepared in July of 1981 and presented to the MOE for its comment and action. While this Officer was somewhat successful in heading off some major impending catastrophes, the circumstances (especially the politics and indecision that characterized this particular period) made it impossible to fully put the Project back onto track.

In November of 1981, after attempting to do what could be done to rectify the situation, the Mission informed the MOE that, until a mutually acceptable reprogramming of the Project was achieved, no further funds would be allocated under the Project. At that point a "hands off" approach was taken by the Mission until the new government assumed power in February of 1982. Several attempts were made between February and June of 1982 to assist the new government to reprogram the Project in a manner mutually satisfactory to both parties and, while at first it looked as though circumstances were favorable, the conclusion was again reached that the best stance for the Mission would be to put all remaining funds into the MIS activity and gracefully bow out once and for all from the curriculum portion of the Project.

VII. Recommendations for future projects based on lessons learned under this Project:

As indicated previously, this Project has provided a rich laboratory for learning what to avoid in future projects. Listed below, based on the lessons learned, are recommendations for future Projects in this area.

- A. Unless there is reasonably well assured continuity in the host country institution, do not embark upon a project of this nature which, by definition, is highly technical and subject to varying interpretations with changes in government.
- B. If a long term Project and if operating in a changing environment, be pragmatic and finance it in incremental phases. Rather than committing A.I.D. to involvement in an activity that, with a change in Minister, could drastically change (and hence A.I.D. becomes stuck in an untenable position) commit A.I.D.'s resources for small portions, thereby permitting A.I.D. to bow out gracefully should a change in government of Minister result in circumstances that are unfavorable to continuation of the Project.
- C. In a Project of this nature and especially where the host country expertise is limited, have the staff training portion precede the actual implementation of the key project activities. Do not carry them out simultaneously.
- D. Do not attempt to take on so much within such a short time frame and with such limited resources. Be more realistic in the design phase - both regarding inputs and time frame.
- E. Design the Project in such a way that A.I.D. has more control over implementation. Specifically, agree prior to Project signature that key Project advisors will be contracted by A.I.D. and that A.I.D. and the host country agency will jointly monitor the advisor's progress.
- F. When designing projects one must take into consideration the current and possible politization of the Ministry of agency to receive the assistance. If success appears dubious due to political factors, no matter how laudable the objectives of the Project, the Project should not be entertained.
- G. Following from the above, for the foreseeable future in an environment as politically charged as the Honduran Ministry of Education, leave Projects of this nature to other IFIs and stay entirely out of the curriculum reform/materials production business.

II In an experimental project of this nature, rather than depending on large numbers of counterparts and offices for implementation, focus on forming a small, well trained, and cohesive working group and charge this group with responsibility for implementation.

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