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**Strengthening Basic Education
EQUIP2, El Salvador
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AMCHAM	American Chamber of Commerce
CIES	Comparative & International Education Society
COP	Chief of Party (Directora del Proyecto)
COMURES	El Salvador Municipal Corporation
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DIGESTYC	Census and Statistics Department (Dirección General de Estadística y Censos)
EQUIP2	Education Quality Improvement Program 2
ESC	Quality Tracking Team (Equipo de Seguimiento a la Calidad)
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FEPADE	Private Sector Foundation for Educational Development
FLACSO	Latin American Department of Social Sciences (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales)
IBB	International Book Bank
INSAFORP	Professional Development Institution of El Salvador (Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional)
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation (Monitoreo y Evaluación)
MINED	Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación)
NEA	National Education Account (Cuenta Nacional de Educación)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization (Organización no gubernamental)
PEA	Annual Education Project (Proyecto Educativo Anual)
PEI	Institutional Education Project (Proyecto Educativo Institucional)
PMC	Presidential Monitoring Committee (Comisión Presidencial de Monitoreo)
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan (Plan de Monitoreo)
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
TBN	To Be Nominated
USAID	United States Agency for International Development El Salvador
UCA	University of Central America (Universidad Centroamericana)
UTEC	University of Technology (Universidad Tecnológica)
CIES	Comparative International Education Society

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EQUIP2
STRENGTHENING BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM
USAID/EL SALVADOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID/El Salvador's Strengthening of Basic Education Program is the compilation of an integrated group of activities that assist El Salvador's Ministry of Education efforts to help achieve the goals of the National Education Plan 2021. The program has two major goals. The first is to support educational policies aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of social investment and improving transparency of the educational sector. The second is to increase and improve basic education opportunities. All program activities seek impact on the national level, but the direct intervention is carried out at 500 schools in five departments, whose beneficiaries have included 500 principals, 3,000 teachers, and 100,000 students. The four year project is scheduled to end in September of 2009.

EQUIP2 directly contributes to the objectives of the National Education Plan 2021. It supports Strategy #2 "Effectiveness of Basic Education" by training competent and motivated teachers and developing student-oriented curriculum. It also supports Strategy #4 "Good Management Practices" by strengthening schools' management, institutional development, community participation, information systems, and monitoring and evaluation.

EQUIP2 contributes to these strategic objectives through a variety of activities. The project is developing language curricula materials for first through sixth grades, as well as introductory teacher training modules on competencies and continuous assessment. EQUIP2 also strengthens school management using the PEI and PEA tools and provides technical assistance to a group of 500 schools. The EQUIP2 project has an alliances component, through which it is advising the MINED on how to strengthen ties with the private sector. The Project is also developing the National Education Accounts system to track investment in education, and connecting the accounts to the MINED information system. EQUIP2 is influencing educational policy through informed dialogues about the sustainability of the Plan 2021 in an effort to advise the Presidential Monitoring Commission for the Plan 2021 during political transition. This advisory role is essential for the improvements to El Salvador's educational system that will take place over the next 16 years.

This report presents a summary of the main activities from July to September 2009, broken down by component. The final section describes the challenges met throughout the quarter as well as the lessons learned.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE QUARTER

Meetings with the new MINED authorities to present achievements and define areas of support for the execution of the 2009-2010 work plan.

A series of meetings with the new minister and vice ministers of education and USAID leaders were held to present the successes of the Strengthening of Basic Education with an emphasis in Language program, including the implementers from FEPADE and EQUIP2. There were also meetings held with the new MINED directors such as the Director of Planning, National Director of School Management, and the National Director of Education.

The meetings have had positive outcomes, in terms of sharing results and the emphatic intention to continue working with the Project. However, the MINED requested more time to define their work plan and organic structure. The Project implementers did not continue the activities that were planned for development with MINED. Once MINED has defined its strategy and priorities, it will hold meetings with the Project in which it could profile activities to be carried. It is hoped that in October a new integrated work plan will have been developed for the extension period.

Consolidation and institutionalization of the National Education Accounts

During this quarter, the Project presented the information and analysis generated from the National Education Accounts, and gave a draft of the sustainability report of the NEA to the new Planning Director at MINED. There were also several meetings held to initiate dialogue over the continuation of the NEAs within the new Ministry. These have been used as a tool by both the minister and vice minister for decision making. It is expected that the MINED will define new counterparts for this project within the new organization.

The EQUIP2 Project printed 150 copies of the document *National Education Accounts General Vision 2009*, which outlines the purpose and results of the National Education Accounts and how to use it as a methodological tool, as well as the structure of educational investments that are made by both the private and public sector. These publications were shared during the USAID's EGAT meeting in Washington, where the AOTR from EQUIP2 presented the advancements made in the NEA.

Socialization of the Municipal Index of Investments in Education

This quarter concluded the study performed on the Municipal Index of Investments in Education, whose objective was to offer an incentive for municipalities to invest in education. This study was finalized in alliance with the Monitoring Commission, and since the commission was dissolved by the new government, the study was taken to the Director of Planning and the Director of School Management with the hopes that the information will be used for the decentralization policy and in coordination with the municipalities that the MINED has defined.

Advances made in four alliances with the private sector

EQUIP2 has continued to form alliances with the private sector over the last quarter. The strategy is to strengthen the impact on learning through social responsibility programs that businesses support in the area of education, coinciding with exercises that EQUIP2 has developed with MINED. The Project has held a total of 24 meetings with businesses such as Price mart, Ingenio El Angel, Banco HSBS, Banco Agrícola, AFP CONFIA, LACTOSA, PROMERICA, UCA and AES. Projects related to quality

education and use of free time during school vacations were presented to these companies. EQUIP2 has consolidated the processes with Bancos HSBC, Agrícola, Ingenio El Ángel and AFP CONFIA, with whom the Project is working to strengthen the design of the projects, create budgets, and memos of understanding. The idea is to develop projects related to quality education through teacher training and strengthening school management. In total, 24 schools will be assisted by the private sector. Four of these projects are in the final stages before implementation, as the Project was waiting for final approval of Project extension as well as the definition of MINED's processes for using alliances.

Delivery of toys donated by the Buque Comfort Hospital: Continuing Promise

The Project received a donation of 2,980 toys for children from the schools that were part of the Buque Comfort Hospital health clinic in the department of La Unión. The coordination for the delivery of the toys was done with the DDE. Due to the emergency of the Flu H1N1, the delivery was suspended during the month of July, as was initially programmed. However, with careful coordination with the DDE of La Union, the new delivery date of August 27th was set. There were 60 schools that benefited from the donations.

Delivery of English books to the Cultural Centers

During September 8-10, 171 packets of books were delivered to Cultural Centers as part of the CONCULTURA alliance. The delivery was coordinated through the director of each Cultural Centers, who worked with the department directors for the exchange of the book packets. In total, 3,420 English books were delivered to benefit all individuals that take advantage of the Cultural Centers in each respective community.

EQUIP2 supported in the development of the “free time” project which complements the PEI and PEA activity in 12 schools

Through a pilot program involving 12 schools that have been part of the PEI and PE strategy, these schools participated in the creation of complementary “Free Time” projects together with the participation of the education community. The development of the projects has included the involvement of 12 principals, 46 mothers, 54 students and 59 teachers that have been directly responsible for the execution of the planned activities. The purpose of these activities is to continue to improve student learning, making effective use of free time during the weekend, in favor of cultural, educational, and sporting aspects, as well as prevention of student violence. The facilitators have offered technical assistance to those schools that are developing projects with visits and assistance through the call center. The 12 educational communities have shown effective organization and responsibility for meeting and developing work plans, from the perspective of opening new educational spaces that strengthen the competencies and development of students. The Project is waiting for approval by MINED for the implementation of this pilot activity in other schools. This activity directly relates to priorities of the strategy that includes the prevention of violence, community participation, culture, and sport components.

Among the opinions expressed by principals whose schools participated in the “Free Time” project, were the following:

“I feel very inspired by the implementation of the free time on weekend project because it involves interesting activities for the kids in my school that concerns pedagogy and prevention.”
Rosa Alba Castillo, Principal of CE Caserío Azacualpita, Department of Cabañas.

“This type of Project is what we need to implement so that the students have the opportunity to learn new things and in our case so they have a “brigade,” and the same students can learn from their classmates.” **José Manuel Guerrero, Principal of the Complejo Educativo Cantón San Isidro, Department of Sonsonate.**

“When I met with the parents along with the teachers to present the proposal for this Project, it appeared to them that this was the opportunity for which we have been waiting for which everyone will support the effort that benefits our students.” **Soraya Pérez, Principal of Centro Escolar Cantón Llanos de Achichilco, Department of San Vicente.**

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ADVANCES IN ACTIVITIES BY COMPONENT

GOALS	QUARTERLY RESULTS	COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS
Component 1. Increase the quantity and transparency of investment in the social sector		
A.2. Methodology and institutionalization of the NEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Project completed the printing of 150 copies of the <i>National Education Accounts General Vision 2009</i> document, and the results obtained from using this methodological tool as well as the structure of investment in education that occurs in the public and private sector in the country -The document was presented to MINED containing the proposal for institutionalization of the NEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Project will engage in discourse with the new MINED authorities regarding the distribution of the NEA documents -The Project will coordinate with MINED to review the proposal for institutionalization of the NEA and its continuation under new management
A.4. Support the Presidential Advisory Commission Plan 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQUIP2 continued the analysis of the information from the monitoring study of the 99 schools with high marks on the 2005 PAESITA - The Project concluded the report on the Municipal Education Index 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Project will evaluate with MINED the incorporation of the Index in the new work plan for the 2009-2010 implementation period
A.5. Information Systems for MINED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Project presented the final proposal to the MINED for the access and security policy for the education information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The access and security policy will be reviewed by the transparency team at MINED -An evaluation will be conducted over the information system to define the next steps as well as the policies of the new administration
Component 2: Improve basic opportunities in elementary schools		
B.1. National language strategy based on competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Project offered technical support to the Ministry of Education, together with the Curriculum Unit, through workshops for teachers on the use of textbooks, methodological guides, exercise notebooks, and language programs for first to sixth grade. Approximately 100 people were trained -Production on the multi-grade materials was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Project will coordinate with MINED to achieve the activities in this area -The Project will continue to hold trainings on the Pedagogical Assistance and Management Advisors on the language strategy in the materials as it relates to teacher training modules

GOALS	QUARTERLY RESULTS	COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS
	<p>halted after a request from MINED, as the new administration has asked for time to define their strategy in this area. The materials for grades 4 and 5 had already been produced</p> <p>-In July two workshops were held for the Pedagogical assistants of FEPADE and for the Management team from EQUIP2. The workshops are focused on showing the use of school materials developed by EQUIP2. Approximately 23 individuals were trained.</p> <p>-The Project is revising the content and form of success stories developed by the EQUIP2 Facilitators</p>	<p>-It has been decided to reduce the number from 34 to 10 for publication so they there can be greater focus on the quality of the content of each story</p>
<p>B.2, 3 and 4. Training for teacher trainers; development of modules for teacher training; and plan for the applied research</p>	<p>- This activity has been successfully completed</p>	
<p>C. Strengthen community participation to improve the quality of education in 500 schools</p>		
<p>C.1. To design the strategy to strengthen the PEI and PEA as a simple and participatory planning and institutional management instrument to reach educational goals in 500 schools.</p>	<p>-EQUIP2 is developing a video on the impact obtained from the application of the strengthening strategy of school management through the PEI and PEA</p> <p>-Together with FEPADE, the Project finalized the development of the integrated strategy delivering management and pedagogical components to the schools</p> <p>-Together with FEPADE, the Project has reviewed the list of schools proposed for the project extension year</p>	<p>- The Project is working to finish the video over the impact from the project on the management in coordination with USAID</p> <p>-Together with MINED the Project will coordinate activities that will include the work plan for this component during the 2009-2010 extension</p>
<p>C.2. Create awareness about the PEI strategy within different groups of actors.</p>	<p>-The Project has developed 12 success stories of schools in the management program which are ready to be published</p> <p>-The Project helped in the collection of information from 8 schools for a study on the associated factors that USAID is performing</p> <p>-The Project is performing a study on the impact of the PEI and PEA , for which the Project collected information from 60 schools</p>	<p>-The final report on the actualization of the impact study from the PEI and PEA will be presented</p>
<p>C.3. Train the facilitators to work on</p>	<p>-The team of facilitators received training on the strategies for the production of texts, the</p>	

GOALS	QUARTERLY RESULTS	COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS
developing the PEI	<p>roll of the teacher, and school discipline. The training was held by the language specialist from EQUIP2</p> <p>-In July, an 8 hour workshop over Effective School Management was offered to 24 technical staff from FEPADE</p>	
C.4. Create local capacity in MINED follow-up teams	- No new activities to report	
C.5. Foster local capacity in school community members to strengthen the PEI	<p>- The EQUIP2 Project has developed 12 complementary projects with technical assistance from facilitators through visits to the schools and 60 calls through the call center on the development of the “Free Time” projects as part of the PEI and PEA activity</p> <p>-A strategy has been designed by the Project for the monitoring of the execution of the projects that complement the PEI and PEA activities, called “Free Time”</p>	-The “Free Time” projects will be implemented in October if it is authorized by the MINED
C.6. Strengthen the tools of school management	<p>-The Project has continued with strengthening the complementary project of the 12 education communities that received technical assistance from the facilitators</p> <p>-The team of facilitators has developed a strategy for strengthening the management of those schools that were involved in learning about the areas contained in the management series</p>	
D. Improving civilian capabilities in 500 schools		
D.1. Conduct regular meetings with the MINED	-The new MINED administration has requested technical assistance for the review of the <i>General Procedures for the Reporting and Registration of Donations</i> that EQUIP2 helped to develop so that there is an agreed upon baseline for the new MINED administration	-The Project will offer technical assistance to MINED for the review of the <i>Procedures for the Report and Registration of Donations</i>
D.2. Facilitate meetings with NGOs and other actors to review best practices	<p>There was a meeting held on the 11 of August between USAID, AED, and UNICEF to define the strategies for continuing educational alliances with the NGOs</p> <p>-On the 21 of September, a meeting was held with the OEI to define possible alliances through shared strategic lines</p>	The Project will continue to develop a plan with the organizations to support public- private alliances in education

GOALS	QUARTERLY RESULTS	COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS
D.3. Identify alliances	<p>-From the 8-10 of August, 171 packets of English books were distributed to the same number of Cultural Centers, thanks to the donations acquired by EQUIP2 from the International Book Bank</p> <p>-The Project has held 24 meetings and held numerous conversations with the private sector to explore possible alliances with the private sector, including: PROMERICA, HSBC, Banco Agrícola, AES, Ingenio El Ángel, LACTOSA, MEGAVISION and Price mart</p> <p>-The Project is in the final stages of planning activities, developing budgets, and creating memos of understanding with Banco Agrícola, Banco HSBC, AFP CONFIA, AES and Ingenio El Angel</p> <p>-On the 27th of August 2,400 toys donated by the Buque Comfort Hospital were delivered to 60 schools in La Union that had been supported by EQUIP2</p>	<p>-The Project is waiting for the signature on a memo of understanding between five projects with private companies: Banco HSBC, Banco Agrícola, Ingenio El Ángel, AFP CONFIA and AES</p> <p>-MINED will meet with EQUIP2 to define the strategy of alliances with the private sector</p>
E. Monitoring and Evaluation		
E.1 and 2. Development and implementation of a plan for monitoring and evaluation.	<p>-The analysis plan for the indicators for the elaboration of the PMP for 2009 was developed</p> <p>-The inputs for the 2009 PMP has been worked on with the support from consultant Ray Chesterfield</p>	<p>- In October, the PMP will be delivered</p> <p>-The PMP will be reviewed by the Project to include the agreed upon indicators according to the activities with MINED and USIAID for the extension year of 2009-2010</p>
E.3. Develop workshops with the follow-up team of the MINED	-This activity is no longer in the work plan.	
E.4. Collect information	-The process for information collection that serves as input for the development of the PMP for 2009 was created	
F. Administrative Process		
F.1 Establish the office and procedures	-No activities to report	
F.2 Hire local personnel	-No activities to report	

LESSONS LEARNED

The response that was received from the schools that had been meeting to define their “Free Time” projects was overwhelmingly positive. Those schools already have the organization that facilitates the participation as well as the confidence among its members who share in a common objective that has made response rapid in the development of their projects. This reflects the importance of free time and its positive use, the interest of the communities and schools, and the need for these types of programs.

Many private companies are in a position to form an alliance to strengthen their strategy of educational investment. The technical assistance from EQUIP2 will strengthen those programs so that they are oriented around improving learning using company resources. The lesson is that the businesses are in a position to assist with innovated, organized proposals that show concrete results.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The change in government, authorities, and team members of MINED units are a big challenge for the Project. When an administration is completely new, the response is always slow, and the case in El Salvador is no exception. The Minister asked for some time to organize and define the administration, and later to work with the Project in the definition of its work plan because many of the activities that the Project was implementing have been suspended.

This delay in the development of activities has signified a reorientation of activities in the Project. For example, it was planned that in June the Project would be working with a new group of schools, but this has not begun because authorization is needed from MINED to enter the school. However, the Project is preparing to re-initiate activities. The facilitators have decided to strengthen its strategies through the following: continuing to assist schools through the call center; supporting the work of alliances for the projects that take advantage of free time in the 12 pilot schools; and collecting information for the review of the PEI and PEA study as well as the indicators.

There have also been changes in the MINED personnel that have been the main counterparts of the Project. Two of these changes that have had the greatest effect were the departure of the information manager and the boss of the unit that managed the NEA. One advantage is that the minister wanted to continue with the NEA but we are waiting to see who will be designated to continue with this process to carry out the new methodology. Another strategy the Project has developed is to continue with the consultant that supported the MINED in the creation of the proposal for institutionalization while being contracted by EQUIP2.

In reference to the production of materials for the multi-grade classroom, the vice-minister requested in a meeting that the activity will not be continued until they had defined the appropriate strategy for the production of materials with the approval of USAID. The subject of multi-grade schools is a challenge in the country, as the schools that perform the most poorly are those that are multi-grade or have just one teacher. In meetings in which EQUIP2 has participated, the Project has made references that needs attention not only for the production of materials but also with a complete strategy that includes teacher training, community organization, and other elements tried during interventions developed in other countries. One positive note is that MINED has the understanding that the subject should be addressed by the new administration. In general, many of the Project activities are in the definition process.

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CURRENT QUARTER

Area of Technical Assistance	Specialist	Dates
Monitoring and Evaluation	Ray Chesterfield	September 22-25, 2009

PROPOSAL FOR NEXT QUARTER

Area of Technical Assistance	Specialist	Dates
Monitoring of Project activities	Ana Florez	December, 2009

SUCCESS STORY

Over the past four years, EQUIP2 El Salvador has successfully implemented several activities that have advanced the education system in El Salvador, a few of which are outlined below.

Thanks to technical support offered by the EQUIP2 team, El Salvador became the first country in Latin America to develop the National Education Accounts (NEA) system and the fourth in the entire world. The NEA tracks information about the educational investment of individual families, the private sector (NGOs, cooperatives, and private business), municipalities, the Ministry of Education, and other public institutions. The MINED has used information from the NEA for decision making regarding important education policies that will increase the amount of state funding designated for education. Based on information from the NEA, the MINED has developed proposals to make secondary education free, as well as to augment the budget for school snacks and school transportation. At the same time, the NEA helped the MINED to improve the system for estimating investment indicators, and to consolidate and develop strategies for improved collaboration with different sectors and actors. EQUIP2 has promoted problem areas observed from NEA data, and has published a final report which was released to the public.

In coordination with the MINED, EQUIP2 developed a strategy to strengthen best practices of school management. School principals received training on the use of simple and practical technical tools that will contribute to improved quality education, as well as on the use of four documents in the Effective School Management Series, developed by the Project. In total, 93% (4,831) of school principals were trained, of which 58% (2,802) were women and 42% (2,028) were men.

Over the Project's duration, EQUIP2 prepared three studies on learning at the classroom level. Teachers, students, and teacher training institutions participated in dialogue sessions and were interviewed to gather data for the studies. The results of the three studies were published into final reports and distributed to El Salvador's decision makers. EQUIP2 also conducted an opinion survey among more than 800 students, teachers, principals and parents regarding the status and future of education in the country. The results of the opinion survey were published in highly circulated Salvadorian newspapers. Both the studies and the survey were used by the 30 representatives from the media, political parties, academia, the private sector and the Ministry of Education, who met during a conference in Washington, D.C. to analyze the status of education in the country. This conference,

hosted by the project, sought commitments from the high-level participants to support the educational objectives of the Plan 2021 throughout the political elections of 2009.

Understanding the link between poor vision and a child's ability to read and maintain attention in the classroom, EQUIP2 proposed and coordinated the logistics of a vision clinic in alliance with a team of 20 professionals and volunteers from Rayjon Share Care out of Canada. The aim of the clinic, "See Well to Learn Better," was to improve learning abilities of students with special vision needs as well as to improve the quality of life for all members of the education community. The vision clinic was a success because of the coordination between national institutions who work to improve student learning. The local partners assisting on the ground level were the MINED, who financed glasses for the students, and the Foundation for the Development of Women (FUDEM), who attended to more than 600 students through eye consultations. Rayjon Share Care donated more than 1,700 pair of glasses for adults and assisted 823 patients. The project was bolstered by the Ministry of Health, who offered 696 oral cleanings for students, and CONCULTURA, which provided a mobile library, or Bibliobús. Many books were read from the mobile library while families waited for their appointments at the clinic, reinforcing the habit of reading out loud to children.

As a result of the second donation from the International Book bank (IBB), 59,351 books in total (49,294 in English and 9,614 in Spanish) were distributed to schools and community centers across El Salvador. EQUIP2, along with the MINED and its determination to strengthen COMPITE, a program that teaches English as a foreign language, worked to secure 9,000 English books for teachers and schools that were part of the COMPITE program. These textbooks were the only English resources that teachers and schools had ever used, as there were no official MINED English texts that teachers could have previously utilized.

During an official press conference early last year, MINED publicly thanked USAID for their contribution towards the development of the language materials for grades 1-6 and for strengthening the curricular focus. The press conference was held to announce the distribution of materials from the *Cipotes y Cipotas* textbook collection, developed by EQUIP2, to more than 5000 schools at the national level.