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**Strengthening Basic Education
EQUIP2, El Salvador
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With:

Research Triangle Institute
Mariposa Consulting LLC

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|--|
| AED | Academy for Educational Development |
| AMCHAM | American Chamber of Commerce |
| 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) |
| DNGD | National Office of Departmental Management |
| EQUIP2 | Education Quality Improvement Program 2 |
| 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 |
| IEA | Ingenio El Ángel |
| 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 |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development El Salvador |
| UCA | University of Central America (Universidad Centroamericana) |

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EQUIP2 STRENGTHENING BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM USAID/EL SALVADOR

INTRODUCTION

USAID/El Salvador's Strengthening Basic Education Program is the compilation of an integrated group of activities that assist, in the long and short term, the efforts and priorities of El Salvador's Ministry of Education. The program proposes activities that support the development of educational policies that increase and improve social investment and transparency in the education sector, as well as increase and improve opportunities in basic education at the national level. The program has been extended until December 2010.

The Project has aligned its objectives and strategies with the new Social Education Program 2009-1014, "*Vamos a la Escuela*," which is the document that contains the strategies and programs that are a priority for the new administration and that substitutes the National Education Plan 2021. The 2010 Integrated Plan reflects the agreements between USAID and the MINED to develop activities that support the educational priorities of the Government of El Salvador. This integrated plan includes all of the agreed upon activities with the MINED, which were approved at the end of 2009, and includes input from the Office of Planning (the counterpart of the EQUIP2 program), the Office of Departmental Management, and the Vice-Minister of Education.

This new report format responds to the objectives of USAID and presents a summary of the main advances of the program between the months of January and March of 2010.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE QUARTER

EQUIP2 begins the strategic review of the EDUCO program

After being approached by the MINED, EQUIP2 began the strategic review of the government run EDUCO program. EDUCO has been one of the major policy initiatives in education in El Salvador since the early 1990s and is widely known both in El Salvador and internationally. EDUCO is the foundation of Salvadoran rural education policy to provide services to the poorest and most remote schools in the country. It is also a point of considerable public debate and of political importance to both the current and former governments. This strategic review is being led by a high level technical team from EQUIP2 composed of John Gillies and Ana Florez of AED and Luis Crouch of RTI, who will be supported by other EQUIP2 team members. The leading technical team has begun to work with a Counterpart Group and with an Advising Group. The Counterpart Group has been formed by representatives from teacher unions and members of the National Education Council, while the Advising Group has been formed by key actors from the education and social sectors linked either directly or indirectly to the EDUCO program. The leading technical team has made two trips to El Salvador to conduct interviews and to meet with both Groups. Over the course of the two trips this quarter, several individuals have been interviewed regarding the effectiveness of the EDUCO program. The technical team also took part in a press conference in which the Deputy Director of USAID El Salvador, together with the Vice-Minister for Education, acknowledged the EDUCO study. The strategic review will produce a set of options with pros and cons to help the MINED make a decision about the program. This is not an evaluation of the

implementation of EDUCO as it is currently being implemented. Rather, the options resulting from this review will be presented to diverse audiences in such a way as to promote education policy dialogue among key sector players. The Project will present the options uncovered during the strategic review in the next quarter.

The review of the EDUCO program includes the following phases:

1. Literature Review
2. Formation of two consultative groups
3. Visits to EDUCO and non-EDUCO schools
4. Development of an open consultation process in the 14 departments and interviews with individuals who are directly and indirectly related to the EDUCO Program
5. Presentation of options within a dissemination strategy

EQUIP2 and MINED agreed on an updated work plan for the implementation of MINED's Integrated Information System (IIS)

In February, the EQUIP2 team led by AED developed a diagnostic to determine the current status of the MINED's IIS in the new administration and to identify new technical teams within MINED who will be responsible for IIS implementation. The results of this diagnostic were shared with MINED in an effort to work together to determine the next steps, roles, and responsibilities of the implementation process. The 8-month work plan for this activity is framed around three main activities: technical assistance, training for users, and regulatory framework. Each of these activities is associated with specific deliverables to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the IIS.

EQUIP2 has continued to strengthen alliances with the private sector through a partnership with Ingenio El Angel and its social responsibility program

EQUIP2 has continued to provide technical assistance to schools served by Ingenio El Angel (IEA). During two visits from the EQUIP2 technical team, school communities were trained in strategic and operational planning (PEI and PEA), and 38 members of management teams participated in the trainings. The Project also provided specific guidance on the PEI and PEA through the Call Center which recorded 36 calls for assistance over the past quarter and responded to 28 requests for assistance from the internet.

EQUIP2 launched its professional development program aimed at the MINED's Departmental Directors responsible for the decentralization process in education

In coordination with the MINED's Office of Departmental Management, EQUIP2 defined the strategy to strengthen the capacity of departmental teams to achieve decentralization in education at different levels. This will be done through improving individual leadership and management skills within a professional development program. The strategy also includes the review of the organizational structure at the departmental level in light of its relationship with the national and school levels and the establishment of tools that enable greater transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness. A special emphasis will be placed on the information system and the use of information at the departmental level to improve decision making. EQUIP2 developed this program based on its experience implementing decentralization programs in other countries. The first session of the professional development program was held this quarter, which focused on effective management, planning, and budgeting. In total, 14 Departmental Directors, the National Director of Departmental Management, and 5 technical staff members attended this training.

EQUIP2 provided technical assistance for strengthening capacities of school management advisors based on redefining their role

The Project has developed a proposal for the roles and competencies that management advisors should develop to effectively support schools. This activity was attended by 22 participants (10 women and 12 men) who have formed a training team for the program.

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STRENGTHENING BASIC EDUCATION
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ADVANCES IN ACTIVITIES BY COMPONENT

| GOALS | QUARTERLY RESULTS | COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS |
|--|--|---|
| A. Component 1. Increased and improved social sector investments and transparency in education | | |
| A.1. At least one effectiveness study completed in collaboration with the MINED on the impact of basic education interventions. | -The EQUIP2 leadership team completed the first draft of the strategic review that included a set of options regarding the status of EDUCO and its role to support MINED's long term goals. This draft was the result of several interviews with local actors involved in EDUCO, literature reviews, meetings with the counterpart and advising groups, and meetings with the Minister and Vice Minister of Education. | -The leadership team will be visiting El Salvador in May and June to present the preliminary results of the options from the strategic review to MINED, USAID, the counterpart and advising groups, and civil society. -The EQUIP2 leadership team will meet with the Vice Minister of Education and USAID to agree on next steps after an analysis of the options presented by the leadership team. |
| A.2 Sources and uses of education finances tracked, resulting in increased and more equitable investment. | -There are no new activities to report. | |
| A.3 Strengthening of MINED capabilities to develop and analyze data within the Integrated Information System (IIS) and to develop a strategy for institutionalization. | -EQUIP2 has been working with the MINED to expand the capacity of the Integrated Information System by including new databases that will become part of the system. -AED's Senior Specialist, Sergio Somerville, was in El Salvador from the 7-14 of February working with the MINED on the plan for strengthening the Integrated Information System, as well as to train a local consultant that will continue helping the MINED on behalf of the project. | -EQUIP2 will conduct training sessions for MINED staff on the use of the Integrated Information System. - Sergio Somerville will visit in April to review the work plan and provide technical assistance and training to the MINED team. |
| A.4: Strengthen the continuity of national educational objectives by reinforcing the | -As part of the EDUCO strategic review, the Project organized a counterpart group, which was proposed by the Project, and advising group, proposed by the MINED, and included | |

| GOALS | QUARTERLY RESULTS | COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS |
|--|--|--|
| capacity of the MINED, the Presidential Monitoring Commission (PMC) and other various stakeholders, who support and monitor education sector progress. | representatives from various unions to create dialogue about the quality of the EDUCO program. | |
| A.5: Establish international and local private sector alliances to support educational priorities to improve quality. | <p>-EQUIP2 trained 38 participants from public schools that are beneficiaries of Ingenio El Angel's (IEA) corporate social responsibility program on strategic and operative planning, which took place on January 21 and 22.</p> <p>-EQUIP2 provided technical assistance to schools. The Call Center registered 36 phone calls, 2 technical visits, and 28 responses for technical assistance through the internet.</p> | -EQUIP2 will monitor the implementation of plans developed by schools |
| | -EQUIP2 received a third donation of books through the alliance with the IBB at the beginning of January, which included 35,299 books in Spanish and English, worth a total of \$707,613. | -Distribution of the books will begin next quarter. |
| B. Component 2: Increased and improved basic education opportunities | | |
| B.1: Improve MINED strategies and tools regarding school management and leadership for school principals to enhance student learning. | <p>- EQUIP2 designed a decentralization strategy for MINED to improve processes and procedures of the departmental directorates.</p> <p>- EQUIP2 trained 14 departmental directors, the National Director of Departmental Management, and five technicians on budget management and presented the project work plans to engage them in activities. The training was held on March 22.</p> <p>- EQUIP2 design a professional development training program for school principals and vice principals that is connected with the training program that EQUIP2 is doing for MINED technical teams, management advisors, and departmental directorates. This design was developed in accordance with the National Social Education Plan that MINED is implementing. This program has been</p> | <p>- EQUIP2 has agreed with MINED on the roll out of the decentralization strategy.</p> <p>-EQUIP2 will share preliminary progress reports and experiences resulting from the professional development training and will continue to hold the trainings.</p> <p>-EQUIP2 will begin activities to develop the training program for school principals, technical teams, management advisors, and departmental directors.</p> <p>-EQUIP2 will begin a study that allows for the</p> |

| GOALS | QUARTERLY RESULTS | COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| | <p>developed for a group of 140 trainers and 20 technical directors from the MINED.</p> <p>- On February 19, EQUIP2 conducted a workshop with the validation team composed of management advisors representing the four regions of the country, addressing the management approach according to the Social Education Plan. There were a total of 22 participants.</p> <p>The Project developed five trainings for management advisors:</p> <p>- First Module: Transforming the school to the new educational model. Held January 29 and 30, February 26 Duration: 24 hours Participants: 63 management advisors including 30 women and 33 men</p> <p>- Second Module: Theme: Management in function of learning, March 24 and 25 Duration: 16 hours Participants: 81 management advisors that included 37 women and 44 men</p> <p>-EQUIP2 held meetings with the office of culture within the American Embassy and USAID to define steps for the approval of the exchange of successful experiences for departmental directors.</p> <p>-In coordination with the director and the technical team of the DNGD, the Project redefined the scope of technical assistance and organization of a workshop and or exchange of successful experiences in the social-cultural context (rural and urban-marginal), to take place in September.</p> | <p>characterization of schools in accordance to their socio-cultural contexts.</p> <p>-In May, EQUIP2 will submit the proposal for the departmental directorate internship/exchange of successful experiences for approval.</p> |
| C. Monitoring and Evaluation | | |
| C.1. Collect Information | | EQUIP2 will collect information needed for the PMP 2009-2010. |

LESSONS LEARNED

This past quarter, the MINED invited a variety of individuals from the education community to offer their opinion on the way that state run education programs are being implemented. For example, in the EDUCO strategic review being led by EQUIP2, the MINED requested the formation of two advisory teams, called the Advising and Counterpart groups, to help gain insight into the status of the program. Participants of these groups included individuals from teacher unions and others from the educational community that had not previously been asked to participate in an open dialogue about education policy. This initiative on the part of the MINED proves that the MINED is receptive to including different points of view in a policy dialogue regarding the status of the education sector and illustrates commitment towards democracy and transparency.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Planning activities jointly with the MINED has been the main challenge of this quarter. The Project counterparts in the MINED are new and are still in the process of consolidating their plans as well as their organization. Therefore, the process to define the terms of reference to hire consultants took a significant amount of time, given the MINED's availability to analyze and make decisions amid a full agenda. Also, requests from MINED to approve all technical proposals, consultants, etc. has contributed to the delay of Project implementation. Many of the consultants proposed for this quarter were not approved on time. The Project is confident, however, that as the MINED has now had time to organize, delays to Project implementation will not sustain and the Project will be back on schedule within the approved timeframe in the upcoming quarter.

It is also important to note that the National Office of Departmental Management is a new part of the organizational structure at MINED, and is currently in the process of being organized. This has affected the implementation of the training process, which will begin in April.

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CURRENT QUARTER

| Area of Technical Assistance | Specialist | Dates |
|--|-------------------|---|
| Integrated Information System | Sergio Somerville | February 16-19 April 11-17 |
| Strategic Review of EDUCO Program | John Gillies | February 16-19 March 7-17 |
| Strategic Review of EDUCO Program and monitoring of program activities | Ana Florez | February 15-19 March 7-19 April 11-17 |
| Strategic Review of EDUCO Program | Luis Crouch | March 7-12 |

PROPOSAL FOR NEXT QUARTER

| Area of Technical Assistance | Specialist | Dates |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Strategic Review of EDUCO Program | John Gillies | May 10-May 15 June 3 - June10 |
| Strategic Review of EDUCO Program | Ana Florez | May 10-May 15 June 3 –June 10 |
| Strategic Review of EDUCO Program | Luis Crouch | May 10-May 15 |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | Ray Chesterfield | June 28-July 2 |
| Integrated Information System | Sergio Somerville | June 21-25 |