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LAC REGIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

JUNE 2013

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The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS LIST

Acronym	English Version¹	Spanish Version
AECID	Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo
AGES	Guatemalan Association for Sexual Education	Asociación Guatemalteca de Educación Sexual
ASDI	Swedish Agency for International Development	Agencia Sueca de Desarrollo Internacional
ASIES	Association for Research and Social Studies	Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales
ASJ	Association for a More Just Society	Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa
BCIE	Central American Bank for Economic Integration	Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica
BRI	Basic Reading Inventory	Inventario de Lectura Básica
CaPRI	Caribbean Policy Research Institute	<i>(Grupo de investigación en el Caribe)</i>
CECC/SICA	Centro American Educational and Cultural Coordination/Central American Integration System	Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana/Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana
CELF	Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals	Evaluación clínica de fundamentos del lenguaje
CETT	Centers of Excellence for Teaching Training	Centro de Excelencia para la Capacitación de Maestros
CIDA or ACDI	Canadian International Development Agency	Agencia Canadiense para el Desarrollo Internacional
CIEN	National Center for Economic Research	Centro de Investigaciones Económicas Nacionales
CIEP	Center for Research and Popular Education	Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular
CIES	Council for International Exchange of Scholars	Consejo para el Intercambio Internacional de Catedráticos
CINDE	Center for Innovation and Development	Centro Innovación y Desarrollo
CIPPEC	Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth	Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento
CM	Teaching Career program (Mexico)	Carrera Magisterial
CNEM	National Council for Mayan Education	Consejo Nacional de Educación Maya
COHEP	Honduran Education Committee Council for Private Business	Comité de Educación del Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada

1. When an acronym does not have a definition in English or Spanish, the authors have provided translations.

COMCORDE	Coordinating Committee for Educational Networking	Comité Coordinador de Redes para la Educación
CONEP	National Council for Private Business (DR)	Consejo Nacional de la Empresa Privada (RD)
COPMAG	Guatemalan Council of Mayan Villages/Peoples	Consejo de Pueblos Mayas de Guatemala
COSEP	Superior Council for Private Business	Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada
COSPAAE	Private Sector Council for Educational Assistance	Consejo Privado para la Asistencia Educativa
CSOs	Civil society organizations	Organizaciones de la sociedad civil
CSR	Corporate social responsibility	Responsabilidad Social Corporativa
CTOPP	Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing	Examen comprensivo de procesamiento fonológico.
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse	Repositorio de datos de información digital y archivos de los documentos de desarrollo de USAID)
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills	Indicador Dinámico de Habilidades Básicas de Alfabetización Temprana
DIGECE	General Directorate for the Evaluation of Quality Education	Dirección General de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación
DINEB	National Division of Intercultural Bilingual Education	Dirección Nacional de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural
DIS	Foundation for the Institutional Development of Social Organizations	Fundación DIS: Desarrollo Institucional para las Organizaciones Sociales
DR	Dominican Republic	República Dominicana
EDUCA	EDUCA Action for Education (DR)	Acción por la Educación EDUCA
EDUCO	Education with Community Participation	Educación con Participación de la Comunidad
EFA	Education for All	Educación para Todos
EU	European Union	Unión Europea
FEREMA	Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu Foundation for Education	Fundación para la Educación Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu
FLACSO	Latin American Social Sciences Institute	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
FUNDEF	Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Teacher Appreciation	Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério (Brazil)
FUNDAHRSE	Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility	Fundación Hondureña de Responsabilidad Social Empresarial

FUNRURAL	Foundation for Rural Development	Fundación para el Desarrollo Rural
GCNPE	Great National Campaign for Education	Gran Campaña Nacional por la Educación
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	Producto Interno Bruto
GIZ	German Agency for International Development/ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	Agencia Alemana para el Desarrollo Internacional
GRADE	Group for the Analysis of Development	Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo
HDI	Human Development Index	Índice de Desarrollo Humano
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo
INEP	National Education Statistics Institute	Instituto Nacional de Educação Profissional
INGOs	International non-governmental organizations	Organizaciones internacionales no gubernamentales
IPAC	Participative Anti-Corruptions Initiative	Iniciativa Participativa Anticorrupción
IPEBA	Peruvian Institute of Basic Education Assessment, Accreditation and Certification	Instituto Peruano de Evaluación, Acreditación y Certificación de la Calidad de la Educación Básica
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency	Agencia de Cooperación Internacional Japonesa
KfW	German government development bank/ Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau	Banco de Reconstrucción (Alemán)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean	América Latina y el Caribe
MECE	Regional Program for the Improvement of the Quality of Education	Programa Regional de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa
MERECE	External Donors of Education Roundtable	Mesa Redonda de Cooperantes Externos de Educación
MIDEH	Honduras Improving Student Achievement Project	Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras
MINED	Ministry of Education	Ministerio de Educación
MINERD	Ministry of Education, Dominican Republic	Ministerio de Educación de la República Dominicana
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations	Organización no gubernamental
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs	Instituto Noruego de Asuntos Internacionales
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico
OEI	Organization of Ibero-American States	Organización de los Estados Iberoamericanos

OREALC	Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean	Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe
OSELA	Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement	Encuesta de observación de logros en la alfabetización temprana
PACE	Program to Support Quality Education	Programa de Apoyo a la Calidad Educativa
PAEE	Business-Education Alliance Program	Programa Alianzas Empresa & Educación
PAT	Phonological Awareness Training	Entrenamiento en Habilidad Fonológica
PPVT or TVIP	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	Prueba de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity	Paridad del Poder Adquisitivo
PR	Public Relations	Relaciones públicas
PREAL	Partnership for Education Revitalization in the Americas	Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe
PROHECO	Honduran Project for Community Education	Proyecto Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria
PROMETAM	Project for the Improvement of Teaching Methods in Mathematics	Proyecto Mejoramiento en la Enseñanza Técnica en el Área de Matemática
PRONADE	National Program for Self-Management for Educational Development	Programa Nacional de Autogestión para el Desarrollo Educativo
PRONERE	National Program for School Achievement Assessment – Guatemala	Programa Nacional de Evaluación del Rendimiento Escolar
PUCMM	Mother and Teacher Pontifical Catholic University (DR)	Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra
QRI	Qualitative Reading Inventory	Inventario de Lectura Calificativo
RAA	Read Across America	Programa Lectura por toda América
RAAT	Rules Acquisition Aptitude Test	Prueba para la habilidad de adquirir reglas
RICA	Reading Instruction Competence Assessment	Evaluación de competencia de la instrucción en la lectoescritura
RSD	Office of Regional Sustainable Development	La Oficina Regional de Desarrollo Sostenible
SBM	School-based Management	Gestión escolar
SERCE	Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study	Segundo Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo
SIMCE	National System for Educational Quality Assessment	Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación
SNED	National Subsidized School Performance Evaluation System	Sistema Nacional de Evaluación del Desempeño de los Establecimientos Educativos Subvencionados
SNTE	National Union of Education Workers	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la

		Educación
SPP	Strategic Partnerships Program	Programa Asociación Estratégica
SWAP	Sector-Wide Approach	Enfoque sectorial
TOPPS	Test of Phonological Processing in Spanish	Prueba de procesamiento fonológico en español
TORC	Test of Reading Comprehension	Prueba de comprensión de lectura
TORF	Test of Reading Fluency	Prueba de fluidez en la lectura
TPA	Teacher Performance Assessment	Evaluación del desempeño del docente
UNCEP	National Union of Private Education Centers	Union Nacional de Centros Educativos Privados
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund	Fondo Población Naciones Unidas
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development	Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional
WB	World Bank	Banco Mundial
WFP or PMA	United Nations World Food Programme	Programa Mundial de Alimentos
WLPB-R	Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery – Revised	Batería III Woodcock-Muñoz (Pruebas de habilidades cognitivas y Pruebas de aprovechamiento)
WRMT	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	Woodcock-Muñoz: Fluidez en la lectura

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Civil Society: A ‘third sector’ of society beside the State and the market, embracing institutions, groups and associations (either structured or informal), which may act as mediator between citizens and public authorities

Source: Cedefop, 2001 in European Commission, 2004

Educational Stakeholders: It would be true to say that everyone is a stakeholder in education. Particular roles and responsibilities devolve to a number of bodies and groups at different levels: local (sub-national), national, regional and international. At each level, stakeholders may be part of government (or intergovernmental at regional and international levels), civil society and non-governmental organizations, or in the private sector. Citizens, parents, and students are also considered stakeholders.

Source: *UNESCO Home: Stakeholders*

Policy: A formal declaration of the way a system should operate, often accompanied by a timetable for implementation and a statement of financial backing

Source: Williams & Cummings, 2005

Policy Champion: Someone or some group with credibility, political resources, and the willingness to risk that credibility/political capital in support of a policy. As the policy may require a significant shift in attitudes and actions, it is important that the ‘legitimizer’ or ‘policy champion’ state that the new policy is considered valid and desirable. The more difficult or contentious the policy, the more important will be the legitimation function.

Source: Crosby, B. L., 1996

Policy dialogue: Carefully constructed, deliberative meetings that address both politically controversial and technically complex aspects of an issue in a dispute. Generally speaking, policy dialogues seek to exchange information and build consensus recommendations among the public, private, and civic sectors through leaders who are in a position to forge alliance, make decisions, or strongly influence the trajectory of a possible solution to a challenging issue

Source: Adler, P. and Celico, K., 2003

Policy framework: A document that provides a rationale and philosophy to guide policy and program development for a given target population

Source: *Youth Policy Framework* (Ministry of Children and Families, British Columbia), 2000

Policy Work: For the purposes of this assessment, policy work is meant to encompass both efforts to improve policy. e.g., through taking action to bring about new policy or change existing policy, and efforts to improve policy implementation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improving the quality of basic education in developing countries is one of the overarching goals of the new USAID Education Strategy Goal 1, *Improved Reading Skills for 100 Million Children in Primary Grades by 2015*. In the past decade, USAID’s Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean’s Office of Regional Sustainable Development/Education and Human Resources (LAC/RSD/EHR) has promoted a variety of strategies for improving basic education that helped set the foundation for achieving this goal. Strategies have included creating a promising model for improving the teaching of literacy in the early grades of primary education (Center of Excellence for Teacher Training [CETT]), supporting the development of reading assessment tools, increasing community involvement and school management effectiveness, and decentralization. Additionally, the Bureau’s portfolio has focused on improving the quality and relevance of policy dialogue around education reform, both as a means of strengthening regional capacity to implement reforms as well as a way to build political support for improving educational quality. In particular, through the Partnership for Education Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL), the LAC Bureau has worked to create a more informed policy dialogue, among other policy advocacy activities, by reaching out to both government and non-governmental actors across the region.

This assessment has three objectives, which are dealt with in the three respective sections:

1. Describe the current state of education and educational reform in three target countries that have received ongoing support in the USAID portfolio in the region, Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic, with an eye toward informing future USAID-funded activities to improve reading.
2. Identify results from the PREAL policy reform-focused modalities and activities initiated since 2006 – “Strategic Partnerships” and Phase II of PREAL’s Business-Education Alliance Program – and to draw lessons from PREAL to inform future work in reading policy and reform.
3. Review education policy trends in the region and identify the most promising policy activities and strategies that could be used to improve reading outcomes in the region.

To address these objectives, the evaluation team first conducted a descriptive analysis of the state of education and education policy and reform in Honduras, Guatemala and Dominican Republic to highlight factors that have had direct impact on education policy work, including the political-economic context and stakeholders’ participation. Second, the team assessed the two new PREAL activities, based on a review of the programs’ quarterly evaluation reports, discussions with PREAL’s co-director and staff in Washington and PREAL’s co-director in Chile, and fieldwork in three countries: Honduras (HO), Guatemala (GU), and the Dominican Republic (DR). The evaluation relied on collaboration with key PREAL partners, engaging them in reflection on the organization’s activities and exploring their experiences in each country. Third, the team went on to analyze a number of education policymaking efforts from the region at large, including from countries not currently a part of the USAID education portfolio, by examining documents from various education reform attempts undertaken in the region. These documents were reviewed to identify and describe education policymaking and implementation processes. In all of these activities, the evaluation team paid special attention to the implications of education policy and reform activities for future USAID initiatives related to the promotion of reading improvement in the region.

SECTION I. OVERVIEW OF STATE OF EDUCATION, POLICY, AND REFORM IN HONDURAS, GUATEMALA, AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In its review of the broader educational environments in Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic, the evaluation team found that:

- Both Guatemala and Honduras² pushed education to the forefront as a primary means for actualizing the national processes of democratization and consolidation after the decline of civil strife in the region in the 1990s. The general political discourse, Ministry of Education (MINED) leadership, and civil society engagement have all positively influenced education reform in these countries.
- The political-economic context of Honduras and Guatemala emphasized the link between the political processes of democratic consolidation and education reform. Examples are the PRONADE, PROHECO, and other decentralization programs linked to the Peace Accords signed at the end of nearly 40 years of civil war.
- Donors and civil society engagement in education policy varied across the three countries visited; key findings include:
 1. Partnerships between donors and governments tended to be collaborative. There was, however, considerable variation in the financing approaches taken by the main international donors of each country's sector plan. Not all donors committed to sector-level financing, direct budgetary support, or the pooling of resources.
 2. The relationships between civil society organizations (CSOs) and governments differed across the three countries. Although all sector plans mentioned the value of stakeholder participation, none of the sector plans reviewed provided clear frameworks or benchmarks for civil society consultation and engagement in national policy settings. The researchers' perception was that governments still had the ultimate say over who was invited to the policy table, and for which purposes.
 3. Donor aid had a comparative advantage in funding high-impact inputs, including policy advice, analytical work, piloting of innovations, knowledge sharing, capacity building of local and regional institutions, and consensus building among education stakeholders. If donor assistance was unavailable, domestic funding did not adequately finance such inputs.
- Education reform advocacy organizations or coalitions have had an active role in the countries visited.
 - In the Dominican Republic, national coalitions such as the Four Percent Campaign³ showed that civil society, when organized and aware of its rights, could promote transparency and continuity, and push the necessary changes in education forward.
 - In Honduras, the impact of *Transformemos Honduras* (Let's Transform Honduras), working closely with the Vice President of the Lobo government (installed in 2010) and FEREMA, helped to promote a greater governmental focus on education, resulting in the creation of a new legal framework. Two years of work on the policy framework resulted in the approval of two laws: a new education law and complementary legislation designed to empower and encourage the participation of civil society in educational reform. These coalitions, led by civil society, developed activities that typically include diagnostic research, the development of strategic ideas and proposals for dealing with specific problems, and advocacy campaigns to persuade or pressure decision-makers to take desired actions.

2. The evaluation team did not find parallel evaluation results on recent education reform in the Dominican Republic.

3. A public campaign to increase the percentage of GDP spent on education to 4%. This goal was one of the most publicized and referenced ideas in the 2012 presidential campaign. After winning the election, new President Danilo Medina submitted a FY 2013 budget that allocated 4% of the GDP to pre-university education, fulfilling the campaign promise.

The coalitions' main focus has been on the critical issue of financing education; less emphasis has been given to accountability for student achievement, improving teacher quality or turning around failing schools. The lack of an existing advocacy agenda focused on learning outcomes poses a challenge for USAID's early grade reading strategy.

SECTION 2. EFFECTIVENESS OF PREAL

Unlike previous PREAL evaluations, which assessed the program as a whole, this evaluation seeks to focus on two new PREAL activities: (a) the Strategic Partnerships Program and (b) Phase II of the existing Business-Education Alliance Program.

THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The evaluation team found that the strategic partnership program has (1) strengthened PREAL partners' capacity to advocate for change; (2) helped to set the reform agenda in the countries where the program had been implemented, and (3) provided practical policy analyses, recommendations and advice to policymakers on how to implement more effective standards, evaluations, and teacher and management policies.

- In Honduras, multiple partners collaborated with PREAL to create preliminary performance standards for teachers and to validate them with a group of teachers and principals. These efforts led to a national training manual on teacher evaluation standards, currently being used by the Honduran government. In addition, the program helped strengthen local government and community involvement in education by increasing the relevance and efficiency of local-level school management, enhancing coordination with the central government, and reaching marginalized, rural populations more effectively. FEREMA identified best practices in local education management in 12 municipalities and worked closely with three of them to develop a model. By February 2012, the project had expanded to 40 municipalities, with concrete plans for moving to a national scale. Two years of work on the policy framework resulted in the approval of two laws: a new fundamental education law and a complementary piece of legislation to empower and encourage the participation of civil society in educational reform.
- In Guatemala, the program brought together divergent viewpoints on controversial topics to promote national dialogue and to build consensus around key education challenges. To achieve this objective, a technical advisory committee first identified three priorities for improving the quality of education in the country: teacher training, school management, and multicultural/multilingual education. They then organized a series of 20 national dialogues with teachers, students, parents, and educational authorities, and produced four papers on each subject. The project successfully framed the debate on the three key education priorities, which were ultimately placed on the national legislative agenda.
- In the Dominican Republic, the school management project built on an earlier project in which PREAL and its partners provided support to the MINED to design a high quality school management model, and piloted it in 200 schools in three districts. The model and outcomes were fully accepted by the local and district authorities, and integrated into the daily operation of schools within two years. The success of the initial phase prompted the government to implement the project in five more districts with additional funding from USAID. The project also generated vigorous public discussion of education quality through an evaluation of the minimum "market basket" of resources needed for Dominican schools to generate high levels of student learning.

Additionally, PREAL's partners collaborated with other advocacy groups to draft a document that was signed by all of the country's presidential candidates, pledging to designate four percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to education.

THE BUSINESS-EDUCATION ALLIANCE PROGRAM (PROGRAMA ALIANZAS EMPRESA Y EDUCACIÓN OR PAEE)

Under Phase II, PREAL continued to strengthen national alliances with the private sector with emphasis on their participation in advocacy coalitions and an increased focus on policy implementation. Examples of accomplishments included:

- PREAL's business education partner in Panama, the Private Sector Council for Educational Assistance (COSPAE), worked with the Ministry of Education to develop the Executives for Excellence in Education program, through which COSPAE matched volunteer business "coaches" with school leaders to provide management training. PREAL and COSPAE later expanded the project into a Strategic Partnership, through which 99 principals and 23 supervisors received managerial training. In August of 2010, Minister of Education Lucy Molinar requested the incorporation of the COSPAE model into the hiring and training process for new regional directors (underway as of summer 2010) as well as for other new senior operations personnel.
- PREAL's partners often advised policymakers. For example, in Guatemala, *Empresarios por la Educación* (Business Leaders for Education) gave a presentation to the Education Commission of the Guatemalan Congress in which they highlighted the need for reforms in the teaching profession, standards and assessment systems, and bilingual education. Members of the Commission then committed themselves to examining and addressing the politically-motivated appointments made by the Ministry of Education, and to improving the quality of education by addressing diversified secondary schools graduates' lack of workforce readiness.
- Following the release of several studies indicating that the teaching profession was significantly undervalued by the Guatemalan public, *Empresarios por la Educación* established the "100-Point Teacher Prize" to recognize great teachers and their innovative efforts to improve learning in the classroom.

OTHER PREAL ACTIVITIES FOCUSED ON POLICY CHANGE

PREAL activities such as Working Groups, Report Cards, and Best Practices have been extensively employed by the government and CSOs advocating policy change. Today's CSOs, which are generally better trained than their predecessors, benefit from PREAL instruments to be more informed and to participate more actively in policy dialogue and advocacy. Some of the achievements are listed below.

- The models, recommendations, and data produced via the strategic partnership, Report Cards, and other PREAL publications from PREAL/FEREMA helped shape Honduras' new Fundamental Education Law.
- The efforts of PREAL's Working Group on Standards and Assessment (GTEE) had convinced the Vice-Minister of Education of Peru to change his position on national standards. He stated that although he had been opposed to establishing national standards in the past, PREAL's work changed his mind.
- A video produced by a group of young people about the education situation in the DR, based on the first country Report Card, was a significant factor in the launching of the *Coalición Educación Digna* (Campaign for a Proper Education) in the lead-up to the 2012 elections.
- The studies and publications of the PREAL teachers' working group were utilized in the DR's Ministry of Education Science and Technology's curricular redesign efforts, with emphasis on the evaluation of the teacher education curricula in the country's universities.

- Recommendations from PREAL played an important role in convincing the Guatemalan Minister of Education to begin developing educational standards in that country. The Director of the Project for Education Reform in the Classroom, a USAID/Guatemala-sponsored program, noted this point in 2010.

SECTION 3. EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING IN LAC

A result of the team’s review of prior education policies that have been implemented in the LAC region, this section traces the trends in the key modalities used in education policymaking. In particular, the section examines two well-known policymaking initiatives and reforms in the region: *Escuela Nueva* and EDUCO. The results of the review demonstrate that stakeholders used variations of four specific modalities to make, influence, and implement education policies: advocacy, policy dialogue, data analysis and capacity building. Most policies described employed a combination of advocacy and policy dialogue efforts in multiple forms. To a lesser extent, the policies examined by the team also used data analysis as a modality to support policy planning and implementation. Finally, capacity building was a key policy modality in multiple policymaking efforts and was especially common when teachers or other local education actors were involved in implementation. Table I lists the type of activities carried out in each of these key policy modalities.

Table I: Key Policy Modalities Employed in Education Policy Change in LAC

Advocacy	Dialogue	Data Analysis	Capacity Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing campaigns ▪ Grassroots organizing ▪ Public dissemination of student achievement results ▪ Policy champion ▪ Media and social merchandising ▪ Creation of official national-level research or advocacy institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-level interdisciplinary commissions or working groups ▪ Participation of multiple public stakeholders, including those in other ministries (e.g. Finance) ▪ Public-private partnerships ▪ Inclusion and collaboration with teacher union ▪ Parent advisory councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducting large-scale assessments ▪ Local Report Cards ▪ Commissioning and supporting academic research on key topics ▪ Creation of national education research/statistics body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training local education officials ▪ Training parents and community members ▪ Creation of career ladders/professional advancement systems to support implementation of educational program ▪ Decentralization of school management responsibilities ▪ Creation and widespread dissemination of guides, resources, and materials

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION POLICY MODALITIES

Despite the widespread use of these policy modalities, scant research exists to document their impact on successful or sustainable education change. Discussions of the effectiveness of these modalities are largely descriptive rather than evidence-based, as more rigorous modes of evaluating policy impact (e.g., experimental or quasi-experimental studies) are, for many methodological reasons, difficult to conduct and largely have not been carried out. At the same time, the policymaking trends described herein offer a ‘menu’ of possible policy modalities that USAID or other donors could employ in collaboration with national ministries or other relevant educational actors to improve early grade reading achievement. Perhaps most interesting, in some cases, education policies or reforms that are often ends in themselves

(e.g., decentralization of school management responsibilities) have also been adapted as strategies to help make and implement other education policies.

CONCLUSIONS

- Policy analysis of the three countries showed that the specific context in each country defined opportunities as well as constraints in education policy implementation. Similarly, interventions such as reading-focused policy-work need to be context specific to gain the requisite support of the various stakeholders for the activities being developed. Consequently, the Agency should consider:
 - a. Engaging at the policy- and system-level in ways that are responsive to each country's conditions and in a manner that establishes and supports processes and structures needed for sustainable improvement in early grade reading and long-term development. PREAL's existing policy dialogue models can foster discussion and consensus around effective reading curricula, instruction, and standards, and can be used as a tool to support the USAID strategy on reading improvement.
 - b. Ensuring that USAID bilateral agreements with government partners reflect the need for long-term systemic education reform and that they support actions that make such reform possible.
- USAID-funded education strategy work in the region should be based on a current understanding of both systemic and school/classroom characteristics and practices likely to influence reading outcomes. A country-level diagnostic study on early grade reading could be used:
 - a. To demonstrate, for instance, the practical impact of teacher training in the classroom and the impact of school report cards as a soft accountability tool that focuses on activities that can have positive outcomes in the short term;
 - b. To create a sense of urgency and to craft detailed evidence-based policy recommendations;
 - c. To motivate reform in the same way PREAL has used the results of Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) to elaborate on the Report Cards; and
 - d. To encourage and support the necessary systemic reforms through national campaigns.
- The policy work is best done by civil society teams in each country in close coordination with the respective ministries of education, possibly including formation of joint steering committees. Other interested donors could be brought in at the diagnostic study or steering committee stage. The degree of joint responsibility makes clear that the ownership of the initiative under development belongs to the ministries, not the donors. It does not necessarily imply the channeling of donor money through the ministries.
- PREAL's national counterparts proved to be strong, well-regarded, and effective players in education reform analysis, advocacy, and action. They were the leading sources of advice and assistance in educational matters and were seated at most tables where education matters were discussed; they worked with the Ministry of Education to improve educational outcomes. The Agency may wish to consider establishing partnerships with PREAL's national counterparts to advocate for and/or implement early grade reading programs.
- The fact that the focus on learning outcomes in the countries where USAID works is still incipient in the early grades may pose a challenge for USAID's early grade reading strategy. The agency should consider building upon the existing Working Group model first implemented by PREAL, which brings experts and policymakers together to concentrate on specific areas needing improvement, to:
 - a. Engage coalitions, through multiple avenues (e.g., providing information or providing a forum to develop reading-focused policy priorities) in dialogue over the Agency's reading-focused strategy.

- b. Provide core support for coalitions to ensure that these networks act as broadly-based national forums on education and early reading policy. Funding should be provided in a way that ensures autonomy, continuity, and decentralized capacity.
- c. Support CSO capacities for coordination and policy voice on early reading-focused policy.

In conclusion, the policy context within Latin American countries implies that USAID can play a significant role in focusing the education policy discussion on reading outcomes. Particularly, to shift the dialogue toward improving early-grade literacy, the Agency has a menu of policy modalities as well as multiple opportunities to partner with CSOs, which have been receptive to engaging with donors, to understand and frame the issue and larger goals of reading within each country's context.

INTRODUCTION

Education policymakers have been working to develop education policies that will help promote quality education for all in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) countries. As stated by Puryear and Ortega Goodspeed (2012), education systems face many problems and deficiencies in the region, particularly in Central America, where nations “suffer from a chronic shortage of qualified personnel—from school administrators to district or regional managers to Ministry of Education staff.” At the classroom level in public schools, school management and teachers’ performance in many instances are poor, instructional time and material are insufficient, and student assessment data may or may not be used to inform teachers’ training, instructional materials, or curriculum design. All these are systemic problems and generally require systemic solutions, which tend to be controversial, making education policy a highly political matter.

Multilateral movements such as Education for All, national governments and donors’ interventions in support of education have resulted in increasing enrollment in basic education in the LAC region. In 2011, the average net enrollment in primary education in Latin American countries was 94 percent (World Bank EdStats, 2013). The LAC region leads all other developing regions in progress toward education for all, but disparities in enrollment among sub-populations within the region persist and improving education quality remains a challenge.

One of the main focuses of the new USAID Education Strategy is to improve the quality of basic education in developing countries inscribed in goal 1: *Improved Reading Skills for 100 Million Children in Primary Grades by 2015*. In the past decade, the Education Team at USAID’s Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, Office of Regional Sustainable Development Education (LAC/RSD) has promoted a variety of strategies for improving basic education, helping to set the foundation for achieving this goal. Strategies have included creating early grade reading assessment tools, creating a model for improving the teaching of literacy in the early grades of primary education (Center of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT)), increasing community involvement, school management effectiveness, and decentralization. Additionally, LAC’s portfolio has focused on improving the quality and relevance of policy dialogue around education reform, both as means of strengthening regional capacity to implement reforms as well as a way to build political support for improving educational quality. Through the Partnership for Education Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL), the LAC Bureau has worked to create more informed policy dialogue by reaching out to both governmental and non-governmental actors across the region.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN

This report has three objectives. First, it reviews the context for education reform and the course of recent events in three countries where USAID has played a strong role in supporting basic education: Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. Second, it assesses certain programs of PREAL and follows up on an assessment carried out in 2006. Finally, the assessment is designed to identify lessons learned and best practices in promoting better primary education policy throughout the region to inform a new reading-focused strategy. USAID’s Education and Human Resources Team of the Office of Regional Sustainable Development of the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau contracted JBS International to conduct the assessment. The research questions addressed by this assessment are the following:

- *State of USAID-funded Education Strategy and Activities in LAC:* What is the current state of education in the region? Focusing on three key countries (Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic), what are the education policies, programming, and practices that have resulted from USAID-funded education activities in the region?

- *Lessons learned from PREAL:* Since 2006, what results can be demonstrated from recent PREAL activities?
- *Reading-focused policy:* Based on available evidence and experiences in the region, what are the potential advantages and disadvantages of the most commonly employed education policy work modalities/activities (i.e., dialogues, public relations [PR] campaigns, high-level partnerships, study tours, etc.) for improving early-grade reading outcomes in LAC?

To address these questions, the JBS evaluation team conducted an assessment using a mixed methods research approach⁴, which relied heavily on qualitative analysis. The team used purposeful, nonrandom sampling to target those whose input would be most valuable to the assessment. The sample composition included education decision-makers and opinion leaders including officials from the executive and legislative branches of government, civil society leaders, heads of teachers’ unions, school leaders, donors, and members of the private sector. The countries designated by USAID for field work were Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic, given the importance that these three countries have had in USAID’s education work in the region over the past several decades.

Assessment Inputs

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation and previous PREAL evaluation. ▪ In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) during field work in Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic. The IDIs comprised 100 interviews in Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An online survey that had 57 respondents from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Dominican Republic. ▪ Review of education policymaking in the region. ▪ Peer review panel. |
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This report is intended for a mixed audience of USAID staff members, education development experts, and other individuals interested more broadly in education reform and early grade reading. The report is organized into three sections, as described below:

Section 1 provides an understanding of the policy context and political and historical background of the three countries visited: Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic. It then turns to a more detailed examination of national education sector policies and priorities, and finally describes the specific roles of policy actors in education reform in the three countries.

Section 2 looks specifically at new PREAL programs and identifies activities with impact on governmental institutions. It draws lessons from PREAL to inform future work in early grade, reading-focused policy.

Section 3 describes the results of the review developed by the evaluation team that discusses the broader educational policymaking and implementation process in the region, through an analysis of past educational policies (not necessarily shaped by PREAL’s work in the region). It addresses some of the major lessons that can be learned from a comparative analysis of policies in the LAC region, and their implications and challenges for USAID’s reading-focused strategy. In addition, it provides the Agency with recommendations for future work in reading policy.

4. Detailed assessment design and methodology is provided in Annex 3.

SECTION I: EDUCATION POLICY WORK IN HONDURAS, GUATEMALA, AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

In consultation with USAID, the assessment team selected three target countries for this study: Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. Each of these countries has made significant efforts to improve its basic education system and has longstanding USAID education programs. Understanding the policy context and political and historical background of the three countries is a critical starting point both for understanding the context of PREAL's achievements (discussed in Section 2) and for identifying broad policy activities and strategies relevant for improving reading outcomes (Section 3). A growing consensus among international donor agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and governments is that policy reform should be based on a strong understanding of country and reform contexts. Research (World Bank, 2007) shows that aid effectiveness increases when it directly supports national efforts. This emphasizes that the local situation should be the point of departure rather than the recipient of preconceived policies, making it all the more important to understand the existing education policy context in the region as USAID moves to focus its efforts on reading. This requires significant attention to an analysis of the country context and the ways in which it is changing.

This section begins by offering basic demographic and political data on Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. The three case countries that are examined in this report are each distinct in terms of culture, political climate, economy, and development indicators. These differences affect the shape of their respective policy context. The section then turns to a more detailed examination of national education sector policies and priorities. Finally, it describes the specific roles of policy actors in education sector plans.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, HONDURAS, GUATEMALA

Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic is a country of 10.2 million, with a purchasing power parity (PPP) of U.S. \$9600 (CIA World Factbook, 2013), and ranked 96/186 on UNDP's Human Development Index or HDI (UNDP, 2013a). Approximately 30 percent of the population is considered to be living in a rural area (World Bank, 2013). The Dominican Republic struggled with dictatorships for many decades of the 20th century. In the 1970s and 1980s, elections were held, but they were often won through violence, intimidation, and electoral fraud. In 1996, a more democratic era of elections began. The government faced significant inflation, especially in 2003 and 2004, but the economy has improved in recent years. Remittances sent from Dominicans living in the United States are an important part of the economy (U.S. Department of State, Background Note: The Dominican Republic, 2012). As in Honduras and Guatemala, the historic, political and economic instability in the Dominican Republic has shaped the quality of its education system.

The Dominican Republic has had one of the lowest net primary enrollment rates of all the countries in the USAID portfolio. By 2011, the rate reached about 89 percent: 88 percent for girls and 91 percent for boys (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). At the same time, those enrolled seem to be progressing adequately through the first year of school, a key year for reading acquisition; for primary school students, the rate of repetition was just eight percent in 2011 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). Although primary school repetition rates in the Dominican Republic are lower than those found in Honduras or Guatemala, the low net primary enrollment rates suggest that this may be due to the fact that fewer children who are likely to have difficulties reading are enrolling in the system. The primary completion rate of those enrolled over the total relevant age group was 92 percent in 2011 (World Bank, 2013). Like other countries in the LAC region, enrollment rates plummet after primary education; in 2011, secondary enrollment was 62 percent (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013). With

regard to student performance, the regional assessment, SERCE, shows that the quality of primary education in the Dominican Republic is very low, with a high percentage of students scoring in the lowest performance bracket. In addition, a mere 0.24 percent of Dominican students scored in the highest performance bracket in math, compared to 11.44 percent regionally (UNESCO, 2008B). Approximately 85% of teachers at the primary level were trained (World Bank, EdStats 2010).

Honduras. Honduras has a population of 8.4 million people, with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP)⁵ of U.S. \$4600 (CIA World Factbook, 2013) and a Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of 120/186 (UNDP, 2013c). Around 48 percent of the population is considered to be living in a rural area (World Bank, 2013). After several years of military rule, Honduras returned to civilian rule in 1979. Democratic elections were held, and a new constitution was approved in 1982. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras, which resulted in U.S. \$3 billion worth of damage and 5,000 deaths. In 2009, then-President Manuel Zelaya was ousted by a coup as a result of his attempts to alter the constitution and extend his term. Since then the country has continued with peaceful, democratic elections (U.S. Department of State, Background Note: Honduras, 2011), but the political instability and natural disasters have undoubtedly impacted the education system in Honduras. Crime in Honduras has reached epic proportions, with the country having the highest homicide rate in the world in 2010 (UNODC, 2011).

Honduras has a net primary enrollment rate of 97 percent (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013), and a primary completion rate of 101 percent (World Bank, 2013). Although these rates are favorable, in 2007, 11 percent of students repeated first grade, probably the most important year of school with respect to reading acquisition (World Bank, EdStats 2007). Furthermore, even with the high rate of primary completion, only 39 percent of students enroll in grades 7 to 9, the third cycle of basic education (U.S. Department of State, 2011). Although the government spends a great deal on education (8.6 percent of GDP) compared to other countries in the region, the achievement level in primary education is low. According to national tests, language achievement in Honduras surpasses Education for All (EFA) goals set by the Honduran government, but Honduran students score substantially lower than EFA goals in math. This may be due to the fact that only 36% of teachers at the primary level were trained (World Bank, EdStats 2008).

Guatemala. Guatemala has a population of 14.4 million people, with a GDP per capita (PPP) of US\$5200 (CIA World Factbook, 2013) and a HDI ranking of 96/186 (UNDP, 2013b). Approximately 50 percent of the population is considered to be living in a rural area (World Bank, 2013). The government signed peace accords in December 1996 after 36 years of civil war, officially ending the prolonged internal conflict. Since then, democratically elected leaders have attempted to continue the peace process, secure justice for past human rights victims, and strengthen foreign relationships. Progress has been slow because of high crime rates, corruption, and low public confidence in the government. In 2001, the government opened a national dialogue to discuss the serious issues facing the country in a variety of sectors (U.S. Department of State, Background Note: Guatemala, 2012).

The legacy of conflict and other socio-political and economic challenges have shaped the education system in Guatemala, which lags behind other countries in the region on various measures of educational quality. Guatemala has a net primary enrollment rate of 96 percent (World Bank, 2013). In 2010, 12 percent of students repeated primary school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013), an indicator of low educational quality. Primary completion rates have increased from 39 percent in 1991 to 86 percent in 2010 (World Bank, 2013). However, national tests revealed that a majority of first-grade students could not solve simple math problems or read short sentences. The Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE), a regional assessment, found that 50 percent of

5. Purchasing power parity (PPP) is "an exchange rate that accounts for price differences among countries, allowing international comparisons of real output and incomes" (UNESCO, 2007).

Guatemalan third graders placed in the lowest reading bracket (UNESCO, 2008B). A USAID study also determined that Guatemalan schools dedicate an average of only 72 percent of available classroom time to instruction (EQUIP2, 2010). These findings suggest significant challenges in regards to teaching and learning in Guatemalan schools.

Table 2: Overview of Countries Visited⁺

	Honduras	Guatemala	Dominican Republic
Political history	Return to civilian rule in 1979. Coup ousted President in 2009. The current administration has integrated actors from various political factions under a “National Unity Government.”	Civil war ended in 1996. Democratic government facilitates slow return to peace, but struggles with crime and corruption.	Elections were stolen with violence and fraud until 1996; now government is democratic, and economy has grown.
Population*	8.4 million (2013)	14.4 million (2013)	10.2 million (2013)
GDP per capita	\$4600 (2012)	\$5200 (2012)	\$9600 (2012)
HDI	120 (2012)	96 (2012)	96 (2012)
Net enrollment rate	97%	96% (2010)	89%
Expenditure on primary education (% of GDP)*	3.1%** (2010)	2.8% (2010)	1.0% (2010)
Primary completion	101%	86% (2010)	92%
Primary school repetition	5%	12% (2010)	8%

Sources: UNDP (2013); CIA World Factbook (2013); UNESCO, 2013.

+ Data reflects numbers from 2011 unless otherwise noted.

* Calculated as total expenditure on educational institutions and administration as a % of GDP

** Estimate

Insufficient Instructional Time. In addition, research suggests that these countries face some of the same challenges in regard to the delivery of education that likely impede educational quality and reading acquisition and development. These include, but are not limited to, insufficient instructional time. Instructional time wasting is common in the three countries. Significant loss and inefficient use of classroom time are indications of poor education quality and have a detrimental impact on learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2008a). Research cited by Abadzi (2006) found that schools were only open 57 percent of the time in Honduras. In Guatemala, children were in class and learning for one-third of the time schools were officially open (UNESCO, 2010). Insufficient instructional time constitutes systemic inefficiency and signals the need for better governance and systemic reform. Actions to increase instructional time include strengthening the supervisory chain from central to regional to school levels, training and feedback for teachers and principals on managing the use of time, and empowering communities to monitor teachers, including attendance and classroom management. Studies suggest that communities in the PRONADE (Guatemala) and PROHECO (Honduras) programs have successfully increased teacher attendance.

This preliminary overview of the current state of education in Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic illustrates some important challenges related to reading acquisition and development for public school children in these countries. Although most children enroll in basic education, most are not adequately acquiring the basic skills related to formal reading abilities, literacy acquisition, and language development. First grade repetition rates, primary completion rates, secondary enrollment rates, and formal assessment results suggest that the quality of reading instruction and learning are low in all three countries.

BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR REFORMS

Despite some important differences in their economic, political, and educational contexts, these three countries share several broad similarities. Honduras and Guatemala have moved toward greater political democratic change in recent years, joining the Dominican Republic. As part of the exercise and practice of democracy, all three countries have undergone decentralization reforms, in which local actors have, in cooperation with central authorities, become increasingly responsible for the administration and delivery of education.⁶ Also, these countries, often in collaboration with donors, have taken steps to establish both national and local assessment systems to monitor the impact of their education systems on student learning.

REFORMS BASED ON DECENTRALIZATION AND ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS

Based on a review of the three countries' National Education Sector Plans, the research team found that, among other goals, all focus on improvements at the primary level was implemented through an increasing degree of coordination and partnership among donors and between donors and governments. Some examples of partnerships between governments and donors are illustrated by the primary education programs described below.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Escuelas Efectivas (Effective Schools), USAID, 2009–2014. This model program is an offshoot of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT), a longstanding, regional reading improvement initiative funded by USAID, and is implemented by the Catholic University, the *Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM)*, in collaboration with the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Education (MINERD). The program provides effective training and mentorship in math and reading instruction for teachers in grades one to four. It

Box 1: Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT)

The USAID-funded CETT program (2003–2009) was created to improve the classroom competencies of teachers, especially in early-grade literacy, in the first three grades in selected countries in the LAC region. It provided a comprehensive training model that included innovative teaching techniques, in-classroom follow-up support, and new materials to support the learning of both teachers and their students. Overall, CETT provided training for 31,620 teachers and 3,475 administrators, which benefited 799,336 students. CETT was highly successful and led to the establishment of national continuation projects, such as the *Escuelas Efectivas* in the Dominican Republic.

Unlike other donors, USAID has had significant involvement with the content of the teacher training curricula through the CETT program in the three countries. The Agency has piloted and developed a research-based curricular framework and successfully trained teachers on it. The program in the Dominican Republic was implemented by a private university, PUCMM, which has a solid research program on early grade literacy. The program, now under the name *Escuelas Efectivas*, is being taken to national scale along with the math curriculum. The challenge to emulating the program in other countries is finding champions like PUCMM and educational leaders who are able to convince others to adopt research-based teaching strategies and disseminate them in training events. CETT provides a solid example in which improved teaching strategies have been able to change teachers' behavior and attitudes in the classroom.

6. Decentralization reforms have been heavily supported by donors, to provide the local oversight and accountability necessary for improvements in access and educational quality (Land & Hauck, 2003; De Grauwe, 2004).

also provides training to school administrators and officials, members of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and community leaders in the development of strategic plans for schools. MINERD is currently funding the expansion of the program to 120 additional schools. This program is an example of the way in which decentralization and partnerships could be used to foster reading improvement in the region.

Project for the Improvement of Teaching Methods in Mathematics (PROMETAM), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 2005–2010. The objective of this project, a partnership between JICA and the MINERD (JICA, 2005), was to build capacity for mathematics education (including creating teaching materials, training, and monitoring), through the development of a teacher’s handbook for mathematics and a manual for working with children appropriate to the curriculum and schools in the Dominican Republic. Primary-level mathematics education materials originally developed under PROMETAM in Honduras were revised to fit the educational needs of schools in the Dominican Republic. The teaching materials were initially piloted in the classroom, with observations and interviews designed to provide feedback to improve the materials for local use.

GUATEMALA

Programa de Apoyo a la Calidad Educativa (PACE or Program to Support the Quality of Education), German Agency for International Development/ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 2005–2013. This program to improve educational quality in Guatemala focuses specifically on rural areas as a means to help the social development of the most disadvantaged in this multiethnic society. The program particularly targets (1) education management; (2) intercultural bilingual education; (3) rural secondary education; and (4) education related to food and nutrition. While working in pilot schools at the primary and secondary levels, PACE helped introduce the new national basic education curriculum, and developed teaching materials and methods for intercultural bilingual education. PACE, operating in 393 schools, also promotes active parent and community involvement, which helps to ensure that the teaching is culturally appropriate and relevant (PACE, 2012). Since oral language development in the mother tongue is a key component supporting early literacy acquisition, the PACE program highlights one existing model to aid in the promotion of reading development in the region.

Programa Regional de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (MECE or Regional Program for the Improvement of the Quality of Education), Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development/Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID), 2007–2008. The program was created to help improve the quality of primary education by strengthening the capacity of school management and administrative personnel. Components of this program included the design of a training curriculum and supporting materials, and the creation of a team to train, evaluate, and monitor school directors. One of the biggest achievements of MECE was that it was integrated into the DIGECADE (*Dirección General de Calidad Educativa* – General Direction of Quality Education), a unit of the Ministry of Education. The program also designed new curricula and teaching methodologies, impacting 2,505 primary school principals, 80 educational supervisors, and 22 educational development units.

Programa Nacional de Autogestión para el Desarrollo Educativo (PRONADE or National Program for Self-Management for Education Development), World Bank (WB), 1996–2010. PRONADE is a school-based management (SBM) program that sought to increase access in poor, rural, isolated areas and to foster community participation in school administration. Initially piloted in the early 1990s, the program’s expansion was linked to the 1996 Peace Accords, signed at the end of almost 40 years of civil war. Stipulated in the Peace Accords was the demand that the government decentralize its education system and that all children complete at least the third grade. In an effort to fulfill these objectives, the MINED and the Commission for Education Reform focused on the PRONADE experience as an effective education delivery system (Valerio & Rojas, 2004). In 2010, however,

pressured by the teachers' union, the program came to an end and the government extended lifetime contracts to the former program's teachers. The prospect of lifetime tenure troubles many parents in rural regions, where teachers in the traditional system have a reputation for missing work or arbitrarily shortening school days. Adding to parents' frustrations in recent years, teachers' union strikes over back pay and raises have regularly shut down schools for weeks or months at a time (Autshchuler, 2010).

Norwegian Indigenous Peoples Program in Guatemala, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 1983–present. This program supports indigenous organizations that work on legal issues, land rights, and education in Central and South America. In Guatemala, two organizations underwritten by this program specifically work with education policy and outreach: the National Council for Mayan Education/*Consejo Nacional de Educación Maya* (CNEM) and the Guatemala Council of Mayan Peoples/*Consejo de Pueblos Mayas de Guatemala* (COPMAG). The CNEM works as an umbrella organization for 20 smaller organizations that promote bilingual and bicultural education. According to a 2006 evaluation of the Indigenous Peoples Program, CNEM is “considered a dialogue partner with the Ministry of Education and currently enjoys good relations with several of its offices... it has strong pedagogic expertise and has developed an alternative, culturally rooted education model” (Borchgrevink, Arnegaard and Bolaños, 2006). This implies CNEM is a key go-between for the population (and for indigenous groups specifically) and the MINED, and it has been a key player in advocating for the strengthening of bilingual education in the country. Among the Council's accomplishments is the establishment of the First Congress on Mayan Education in 1994, as well as a workshop for education reform policy from the Mayan perspective. The COPMAG program started as an organization dedicated to the education of orphans who had lost their parents during the civil war. However, its mission has broadened to include literacy in areas where government programs are inaccessible. From its inception in the mid-90s until 2006, the program had reached more than 30,000 people (Borchgrevink et al., 2006)

HONDURAS

Programa de Educación Primaria e Integración Tecnológica (Program for Primary Education and Technology Integration), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 2011. The Government of Honduras created the Presidential Program for Health, Education, and Nutrition, called *Programa Bono Diez Mil* (PBDM or Ten Thousand Bonus Program), a money transfer program that provides resources to the poorest Honduran families so that they can afford social services. Money transfer programs have been successful in increasing access to education in a number of other countries throughout the region; however, there is no evidence that they, in themselves, improve the quality of education. The Program for Primary Education and Technology Integration sought to close this gap by intervening at the school level and particularly with families who benefited from PBDM. A major component of the program was to strengthen the literacy and math skills of children in grades 1 to 6 by supporting the implementation of models to improve learning in the classroom, providing training for teachers, and distributing materials for students. This program is an example of early literacy interventions that employ technology in the classroom to support basic skills.

Proyecto Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria (PROHECO or Honduran Community Education Project), World Bank, 1999–present. PROHECO is a community-based education program launched in 1999 with the objective of enhancing access to education and fostering community participation in school-related decision-making. Studies by the Ministry of Education in 1997 showed that more than 14 percent of school-age children were not enrolled in school, and 85 percent of these children lived in rural areas. Building on experiences in El Salvador and Guatemala, the Honduran government decided to use a school-based management model to address these deficiencies and establish new preschool and primary schools in remote rural villages. By the mid-2000s, PROHECO had created more than 3,000 new schools, accounting for roughly 8 percent of total primary school enrollment.

IMPACT OF DECENTRALIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP REFORMS

In all three countries, the reforms described here that support decentralization and strengthened partnerships among donors and stakeholders have resulted in both positive and negative impacts on education delivery and quality. In the Dominican Republic, the broader participation of civil society in advocating for improved education, culminating in the demand for “4% for Education” and the May 2012 agreement that all presidential candidates detail their plans for supporting quality education, shows growing national support for reform. In the cases of Guatemala and Honduras, the political environments seemed especially primed for the implementation of education reform. Both countries pushed education to the forefront as the primary means for actualizing the national processes of democratization and consolidation after the 1996 Peace Accords. The general political discourse, MINED leadership, and civil society engagement have all positively influenced education reform in these countries. This outcome echoes recent research findings that political and economic crises are key events that “ignite” school system reform. “Crises of grand proportions have often been credited with jolting a change in behavior across multiple domains ... school system reform efforts [are often] designed either to mitigate the potential ill effects of the crisis or to take advantage of new opportunities” (McKinsey, 2009).

Among the programs described here, the evidence suggests decentralization and partnership reforms, such as PRONADE and PROHECO, have had the strongest systemic effect in improving access. Both programs have promoted increased access for children in rural areas, decentralization, and control over teacher hiring and placement in Guatemala and Honduras. To foster the demand for reform, local reformers used both information dissemination and inclusion strategies that involved meetings and workshops with local actors, MINED leaders, civil society leaders, business leaders, journalists, and others. The examples from the Dominican Republic appear to be less far-reaching, although, as noted, support for reform appears to be growing.

Nevertheless, recent changes in the political arena in Honduras and Guatemala seem to have undermined decentralization efforts, particularly in regards to efforts to increase accountability and civic engagement in remote communities.⁷ In Honduras, patronage politics have captured the program, with party loyalties—rather than merit or parent choice—dictating teacher and field staff selection. Guatemala’s abandonment of PRONADE in 2010 marked a victory for teachers’ unions (Autshchuler, 2010). In sum, while these two programs have yielded greater access and community participation, they have also raised questions about education quality⁸, teachers’ labor rights, and governments’ capacity to promote genuine civic involvement in remote rural areas. These outcomes suggest that teachers, their unions, and Ministry staff often resist decentralization (De Grauwe, 2004; Grindle, 2007); local communities lack capacity to take up new responsibilities; and there is no guarantee against corruption and undemocratic practices in local-level structures (De Grauwe, 2004). These findings have important implications for the development of reading policy in the region. For example, initiatives to promote community participation in the execution of reading promotion activities may result in uneven program delivery if local capacity to carry out such programming is not addressed.

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

The region has also seen an increase in the use of assessments to measure student performance in recent years. These assessments have taken the form of both large-scale, standardized assessment

7. Decentralization efforts in the Dominican Republic had receded in the last decade, to be reinitiated on a small scale in late 2011 via a ministerial resolution to provide greater funding to localities’ educational systems. A workshop on “Re-Launching Decentralization to Promote Quality Education” was led by the Ministry in February, 2012 (http://www.dominicanaonline.org/portal/english/cpo_noti4125.asp).

8. PRONADE and PROHECO have not impacted the quality of education in these two countries given that raising quality has not necessarily been at the center of these initiatives, the quality improvement objective has instead been considered an indirect outcome or simply been added on as the programs have matured (Di Gropello, 2005).

systems, and locally-implemented assessment tools such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). Examples of these systems in Honduras, Guatemala and Dominican Republic are described below.

National Assessment Systems. Overall, although all three target countries have made progress in developing their national assessment systems, many gaps in the assessment process still exist. In the DR, primary schools conduct internal assessments for students in first through fourth grade. These exams demonstrate the students' mastery of the curricula (e.g., math, reading). National examinations are administered in fourth and eighth grade, covering Spanish, reading, social sciences, and natural science. The score on this national exam makes up 30 percent of students' final grade for the school year. Since 2004, the methods of distributing test results have improved greatly; parents and students can now access results via short service SMS messaging, over the phone, or on the MINED website. Nevertheless, despite improvements in the dissemination of test results, students' performance on the national examinations is still not used to inform teachers' training or curriculum design for the following year (PREAL, 2010a).

Guatemala has made significant strides in student learning and performance evaluation. From 1997 to 2001, the *Programa Nacional de Evaluación del Rendimiento Escolar* (PRONERE or National Evaluation for Education Performance Program) began evaluating groups of students from different grades in the subjects of reading and mathematics. After several iterations of examinations, in 2005 the Ministry of Education and PRONERE designed an exam targeted to all third-grade students that allowed comparisons to be made across cohorts of students. Although these evaluations have given education decision-makers a great deal of information regarding student performance, the results are not yet being used to adjust the curriculum in the classroom or to make changes to the education system more broadly (PREAL, 2008).

In 2003, the Education Secretariat of Honduras developed the *Currículo Nacional Básico* (National Basic Curriculum) that guides the educational standards and national evaluation system. Starting in 2004, the Education Secretariat in Honduras began working with USAID and other international partners on the *Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras* Project (MIDEH – Improving the Impact of Student Performance in Honduras). This program sought to unify the various aspects of curriculum design, learning standards, and evaluation. Using the national curriculum as a base, MIDEH helped to create an assessment system, consisting both of internal and external learning evaluations.

In classrooms, teachers administer monthly tests (*pruebas formativas mensuales*), which allow them to track students' progress throughout the school year and to use the results to adapt lesson plans to address areas for improvement. At the end of the school year, a representative sample of students take an end-of-grade test, which measures academic performance in the areas of Spanish and mathematics based on the Education for All (EFA) goals in Honduras. This exam is essential for determining whether students are learning the necessary content as well as for generating useful information for decision-making within the education system. Even with the implementation of MIDEH, Honduras still needs an integrated, national assessment that monitors student learning at each grade level. The results from these examinations could then be used to improve the quality of education throughout the system (PREAL, 2010b).

Small-Scale Reading Assessment. Although small in scale, other types of assessments such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) have been used in Honduras and Guatemala. EGRA is designed to assess how well children in the early grades of primary school are acquiring key reading skills, and, if they are not, to determine which areas of instruction need improvement. Although these tests are not nationally representative, they often help determine levels of fluency in reading. In Guatemala, two-thirds of grade 3 students could read more than 40 words correctly per minute, but wide disparities across language groups existed. Students whose mother tongue was Mam had average reading speeds below

that measure, whereas students whose mother tongue was Quiche or Spanish read more than 60 words per minute (UNESCO, 2010).

EGRA tests have raised awareness of early grade reading challenges and have been used to inform the development of interventions to improve instruction. For example, EGRAs have been used to monitor the performance of schools participating in improvement programs supported by Save the Children in Guatemala (2008) and CARE in Honduras (2009). Also, EGRA results have been used to promote policy dialogue about how well countries are providing children with opportunities to acquire reading skills. In Nicaragua (2008), for instance, post-EGRA activities have included conducting capacity-building workshops with ministry officials, implementing a teacher training program on reading, developing a “best-practice” video demonstrating good reading instruction to support teacher training, developing a public awareness video to explain the importance of reading, and implementing a social campaign to increase community interest and participation in improving reading (USAID, 2011a).

IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT USE IN HONDURAS, GUATEMALA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: HIGHLIGHTING THE LOW QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The end of conflict in Honduras and Guatemala also brought new opportunities for innovative partnerships to address low educational quality and long-standing educational disparities. In Guatemala, for example, the Peace Accords included a commitment to support the development of indigenous education. With the help of funding from Norway, directed through Save the Children, 60,000 children are reported to have benefited from improved education quality, with the recruitment and training of bilingual teachers and curriculum development playing important roles (UNESCO, 2010).

Despite the implementation of such interventions, learning, as measured by results on national, regional (SERCE), and local assessments, is low in all three countries, and no evidence is evident for improvement in learning outcomes over time. Other, more indirect measures of learning also support this conclusion. There are acutely high repetition rates in first grade in both Guatemala and Honduras, reaching 25 percent and 12 percent respectively (World Bank EdStats, 2008). High dropout rates in primary education are another alarming indication of poor learning. These low achievements may be related to a lack of basic reading skills, which is especially troubling since evidence suggests that children who fail to acquire fluent reading and math skills in grades 1 to 2 tend to develop difficulties that resonate all through their academic life (Abadzi, 2006).

Based on the review of select educational reforms in Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, this report hypothesizes that early-grade learning problems in the three countries seem to be shaped by some key systemic problems, especially low-quality instruction. Many of the basic education reforms described in this section included activities aimed at improving curriculum and instruction, such as curriculum development delivered through new teacher manuals and textbooks and in-service teacher training in specific subject areas, such as reading. These activities suggest that improving the quality of instruction has been identified as a main lever for educational reform in these countries. However, the persistently low achievement results of public school students in these countries suggest that existing models of instructional improvement have been inadequate, in their scope, their design, or their fidelity of implementation.

EDUCATION FOR ALL

While all three countries exhibit insufficient learning performance in primary education, only Honduras has been approved for the Global Partnership for Education/Education for All (GPE-EFA) (Secretaría de Educación de Honduras, 2012). Even though the Honduran government has made considerable efforts to make progress, the country is not on track to reach most of the EFA intermediate goals, and most likely will not be able to achieve the goals set for 2015.

NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN

The following table outlines the primary education goals set by each of the three countries with an emphasis on access and quality, as well as mechanisms their governments have established to reach these goals.

Table 3: Basic Education Sector Reform Programs in the Three Countries

	Honduras	Guatemala	Dominican Republic
National Education Plan	<i>Ley Fundamental de la Educación (2011) and Ley de Fortalecimiento de la Educación y Participación Social (2012)</i>	<i>Plan Estratégico de Educación 2012–2016</i>	<i>Plan Decenal de Educación 2008–2018</i>
Goals	Increase participation of families and community at school, provide equal education to all, improve facilities, and establish education centers	Increase community and family participation in education, build teacher capacity, increase access to and quality of education, and increase accountability	Improve quality standards, evaluation system, teacher capacity; increase parental, community, and CSOs participation; improve curriculum; integrate information and communications technology (ICT) in the education process
National Basic Education Programs/Policies	Quality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Programa de Educación Primaria e Integración Tecnológica</i> Access: PROHECO	Quality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PACE ▪ MECE Access: PRONADE	Quality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROMETAN ▪ <i>Escuelas Efectivas</i>

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN POLICY REFORM

Understanding the interests of political actors and influential economic or social groups and the incentives under which they operate is crucial because stakeholders can either act as drivers of reform movements or use their influence to block or reverse change. Analyzing the reform context also helps examine the significance of the institutions that govern the relationships between stakeholders in the reform context. The formal and informal “rules of the game” shape the interactions between different agents and thus determine policy outcomes (North, 1990). Many of the stakeholders described here are likely to play a role in the creation and implementation of any new reading policy.

DONOR COMMUNITY

In all three countries, national education plans and education laws focusing on improvements at the primary level allow significant coordination among donors and between donors and governments, and involve parents and communities. In addition to the programs presented previously, donors participate in multiple coordination activities. Coordination of donor-funded activities will be important to developing reading policies, but these efforts vary based on the national context.

In Guatemala, a Donor Education Network has been active for the past 15 years and holds meetings on a monthly basis. Discussions include major sectoral developments and donor-funded activities to avoid duplication of efforts. Active donors participating in this network include: USAID, IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), UNICEF (United Nations

Children’s Fund), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), GIZ (German Agency for International Development), OEI (Organization of Latin American States), EU (European Union), AECID (Spanish Agency for International Development), and KfW (German Bank for International Development). The Ministry of Education’s International Cooperation Directorate also participates in these meetings. Since the development of reading skills is an area of intervention for activities focused on educational quality, some or all of these donors may be funding initiatives in that area.

In Honduras, there is strong coordination among education donors. In 1998, after Hurricane Mitch devastated the country, donor tables were created to address different themes such as education, health, governance, and democracy. The Mesa Redonda de Cooperantes Externos de Educación (MERECE or External Donors of Education Roundtable) has a system rotating coordination among donors for six-month periods, and holds formal meetings with top-level Ministry of Education officers every other month. Donors also participate in working groups for specialized areas of intervention and are constantly sharing their projects with other donors. MERECE keeps a current file on all education interventions that can be found on the MINED website. All work, whether done through the government or through other implementing partners, is coordinated with the government. Other actors are involved via different programs that include civil society participation. Active donors participating in this network include USAID, IDB, JICA, UNICEF, WB, GIZ, OEI, EU, AECID, ACDI, BCIE (*Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica*), OEI, UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), WFP (United Nations World Food Programme), ASDI (*La Agencia Sueca de Desarrollo Internacional*), and KfW.

The donor community is not large in the Dominican Republic and meetings are organized on an ad hoc basis. Donor-government meetings have been reported to occur more frequently than meetings among donors. Active donors participating in education include Spain (AECID), the United States (USAID), Japan (JICA), and UNICEF, among others. The relatively weak collaboration among donors in this national context may present more challenges for coordinating reading-related educational initiatives in the Dominican Republic than in Honduras.

Although donor aid is a vital source of resources for basic education, particularly for the Dominican Republic and Honduras, it is a relatively small share of total official development assistance, accounting for nine percent in 2006–2007 (UNESCO, 2008a). The approaches taken by the primary international donors towards each country’s sector plan also vary significantly. Not all donors have committed to sector-level financing, direct budgetary support, or the pooling of resources. In Guatemala, there is an ongoing effort to align all development activities in a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp)⁹, but this is a work in progress led by the MINED. In Honduras, donors commit to education financing through the pooling of resources. Furthermore, levels of aid to basic education vary substantially by country, as do levels of dependency on foreign contributions (Table 4).

Table 4: Donor Partnerships in National Education Plans

	Honduras	Guatemala	Dominican Republic
Donors	Spain (AECID), United States (USAID), Japan (JICA), German (GIZ & KfW), WB, IDB, PMA, UFPA	Spain (AECID), United States (USAID), Japan (JICA), German (GIZ & KfW), Europe (EC), IDB, UNICEF, UNESCO, OEI	Spain (AECID), United States (USAID), Japan (JICA), UNICEF

9. A sector-wide approach (SWAP) is an approach to support a country-led program for a coherent sector in a comprehensive and coordinated matter (World Bank, 2004).

	Honduras	Guatemala	Dominican Republic
Donor means of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MERECE local sector coordination group ▪ Cross-cutting working group ▪ The G-16 (group of 16 development partners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Donor Education Network ▪ Cross-cutting working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Donor community is not big and meeting are hold on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis
International aid for basic education	U.S. \$49 million*	U.S. \$45 million (2008)	U.S. \$36 million (2009)
Government expenditure for basic education ¹⁰	U.S. \$477 million (2010)	U.S. \$545 million (2008)	U.S. \$467 million (2009)

*Average aid from 2008–2009

Sources: UNESCO Regional Overviews, 2008 and 2010; World Bank, 2008–2010; World Bank Country Partnership Strategies for Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic (2011).

Variations in the amount of external donor funding in LAC countries suggest that different impacts of donor-funded activities can be expected. However, it is not just the amount, but also the way in which funding is targeted that is likely to shape outcomes. Donor aid has a comparative advantage in funding high-impact inputs that might not be adequately funded by domestic funding in the absence of external aid (World Bank, 2008). As reading improvement is a key component of the current USAID strategy, the focus of USAID funding is likely to make the most impact if tied to activities focused on reading policy and programming.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: PARTNERSHIPS IN NATIONAL EDUCATION PLANS

A comparison of all three countries' national education plans shows that they all emphasize partnership with non-governmental actors and citizen participation. These policy actors are expected to have an active role in the development and monitoring of national policy goals by reinforcing accountability at the several decentralized levels of education governance. However, none of the sector plans provides a clear framework or benchmarks for consultation and engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) in national policy settings. Since literacy is acquired both within and outside of schools, understanding the potential role of civil society in forming and implementing educational policy and reform is essential to USAID's current educational strategy.

CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

In each of the three case study countries, civil society organizations have become active, albeit to different extents, in shaping education reform. As Table 5 demonstrates, each country has unique civil society actors involved in education reform with different expressed objectives. Of the three countries visited, the Dominican Republic has one of the most active civil society education organizations involved in education reform. The major players in the country have been and continue to be two of the universities (PUCMM and *Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo* [INTEC]), mainly because their presidents, boards, and faculty have enough political clout to influence policy decisions in education. Ironically, the state university (UASD), which offers education degrees and can boast of large enrollment in these programs, remains largely absent from the policy conversation. It has become a mere service

10. This monetary figure is calculated by multiplying the "total expenditure on educational institutions and administration as a percentage of GDP from public sources in primary education" by the GDP for a given year.

provider (degree-conferring for the low-income students, who end up as public school teachers), and its presidents and education school deans have not joined the policy debate.

PUCMM developed a research-based program on early grade reading, supported the CETT regional program, and continues to work with *Escuelas Efectivas*, an offshoot of CETT.

Table 5: Civil Society Organization Partnerships in National Education Plan

	Honduras	Guatemala	Dominican Republic
Objective of partnerships with CSOs	Institutional capacity building, improving the quality of education, promoting early grade literacy, supporting pre-primary education, integrating technology in the classroom, improving teacher capacity, and providing alternative basic education	Supporting formal education at all levels, supporting school/education, improving management, improving teacher training, improving the quality of education, and increasing knowledge about bilingual education	Ensuring access to pre-primary education, promoting literacy, supporting basic education, improving teacher training, supporting decentralization and education quality
International and local NGOs	<p>NGOs: FEREMA, Coordinating Committee for Educational Networking/Comite Coordinador de Redes para la Educación</p> <p>Coordinating Committee for Educational Networking/ Comite Coordinador de Redes para la Educación (COMCORDE), Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo de Honduras (FUNADEH), Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa - Honduras (ASJ)</p> <p>INGOs: Fe y Alegría, CARE</p>	<p>NGOs: Empresarios por la Educación, Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CIEP), ASIES, FLACSO</p> <p>INGOs: Fe y Alegría, Save the Children, World Vision, Intervida World Alliance</p>	<p>NGOs: FLACSO, EDUCA, Centro Cultural Poveda, Plan The Dominican Republic</p> <p>INGOs: Plan International, Save the Children</p>
Coalitions	Transformemos Honduras	La Gran Campaña Nacional por la Educación	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Socio-Educational Forum ▪ Educación Digna

Source: Evaluation Team Fieldwork

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL NGO'S IN EDUCATION

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the three countries work with CSOs and have strong interest in providing monitoring and follow-up to the national policies, both as partners in development

and as a demand-side force to ensure accountability and results. Some NGOs target their work to improvements in the reach and effectiveness of the national education system, while others continue to target specific, localized issues and problems. Organizations such as FEREMA in Honduras, EDUCA and FLASCO in the Dominican Republic, and the Center for National Economic Research (CIEN) in Guatemala are among the few that have the capacity to conduct or commission research and to play leadership roles in issue-focused groups and other sector planning bodies.¹¹

All three countries have a large local and international NGO sector, with a wide variety of activities in education and a considerable variety of interest areas among them. While some organizations focus on pedagogical innovation, curriculum, and education financing, others focus on the construction of schools and the provision of material, equipment, school meals, and scholarships.

Civil society actors, however, generally seem to lack the capacity to engage consistently in policy dialogue, evidence-based advocacy, and oversight activities in the education sector. A recent study in Honduras, where partnerships between the government and NGOs seem to be weaker compared to the other two countries, revealed that NGOs sought donors to provide support and/or technical assistance to ensure more meaningful policy dialogue between the government and civil society on issues of national and local development (World Bank, 2011).

International non-governmental organizations have also played a critical role supporting sector policies. In 2009, Plan International undertook a public campaign after conducting a diagnostic study on violence in Dominican schools. In doing so, it did not confront the MINED but instead worked with it, or at least with sympathetic units within the Ministry. A key component of the campaign was the drafting of guidelines for teachers and facilitators to train them in positive discipline methods. UNICEF funded the publication and distribution of the guidelines. Videos were also prepared and shown widely. MINED officially accepted the guidelines and applied them to the whole public education system.

COALITIONS AND NETWORKS

Advocacy- and policy-oriented civil society coalitions are a new, but increasingly common, phenomenon in developing countries (Perkin & Court, 2005). Coalitions take on issues related to the adequacy of government provision of education, advocating for education as a right, and undertaking monitoring and community mobilization activities to support their advocacy roles (Mundy et al., 2008).

In Honduras in 2009, the Association for a More Just Society/Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa (ASJ) founded *Transformemos Honduras* (TH), a national movement for the promotion of education reform. ASJ, a large and active civil society advocacy organization in its own right, attempted to turn the national crisis taking place at the time into an educational opportunity. TH currently has a large membership, including civil society organizations such as VISION and CARITAS, private universities, and approximately 40,000 individual members, including “lots of teachers”¹² in all parts of the country.

In 2011, the Dominican Republic formed a coalition of CSOs called the Socio-Educational Forum¹³ to monitor and track budgetary administration by analyzing the different categories of the budget allocated to the sector. To that end, it created a committee of prominent persons called the Expert Committee on the Education Budget. The purpose of the Expert Committee was to advocate increased investment in education to ensure universal quality schooling by monitoring public spending and encouraging the timely and efficient use of budgeted funds.

11. Not coincidentally, these three NGOs have been chosen by PREAL to be its strategic partners in the three countries. They also tend to be active within national CSO coalitions in the education sector.

12. March 2, 2012, interview with Carlos Hernandez, Executive Secretary of ASJ

13. The forum is a broadly representative body, including NGOs, the private sector (e.g., business-education associations), and 140 other organizations.

Educación Digna is another coalition in the Dominican Republic, made up of nearly 200 organizations with the goal of pressuring the government to allocate four percent of GDP to education, in support of Law 66-97 of the Dominican constitution. The group attempts to track the promises and education policy proposals of presidential candidates and legislators as well as the voting record on education-related issues of each member of the major party. This “social audit” underlies the *Educación Digna* strategy. The organization maintains a library of documents—position papers and contracts for incoming officials—and reminds civil society groups to hold candidates (and those elected to office) accountable for what they promise. The group seeks to integrate CSOs in the Dominican Republic as well as in other countries into a single front for demanding increased education funding, among other relevant issues. The group also mobilizes civil society groups in marches or protests outside government buildings.

In Guatemala, a coalition of CSOs called the *Gran Campaña Nacional por la Educación (GCNPE)* emerged in 1999, and its first important demand was for an increase to the national education budget (ASIES, 2012b). It started as a pluralistic network with a common goal: more and better education for Guatemala.¹⁴ The idea of a social audit is also a key instrument of the *Gran Campaña*. At the beginning of the 2002 school year, the GCNPE published its first social audit results. This action set a precedent for the country and for other CSOs, establishing the concept of accountability for the administration of public education as a valid topic for public discussion. Today, the *Gran Campaña* integrates entrepreneurial leadership, the business sector, religious groups, indigenous associations, and a select group of professionals that discuss present proposals, and conduct analyses of state-of-the-art education and its policies. *Empresarios por la Educación* is one of the almost 80 organizations that participate in this social movement that helps advance the educational policy agenda.

TEACHERS' UNIONS

Teachers' unions (Table 6) are clearly among the most powerful organized actors in the education system. They represent large constituencies and have historically mobilized these constituencies around educational, financial, and political issues. Across the countries studied, the evaluation team found that teachers' organizations play a strong role in resisting the implementation of new policies. In Guatemala, for instance, the government abandoned the PRONADE initiative in response to pressure from the teachers' union. As mentioned previously, this has undermined efforts to increase accountability in the education system and civic engagement, especially in remote communities.

Table 6: Teachers' Unions in the Three Countries

Country	Teachers' Unions	Acronym
Honduras	Colegio Profesional "Superación Magisterial" Hondureño,	COLPROSUMAH
	Colegio de Profesores de Educación Media de Honduras	COPEMH
	Colegio Profesional "Union Magisterial"	COPRUM
	Primer Colegio Profesional Hondureño de Maestros	PRICPHMA

Gran Campaña Nacional por la Educación (GCNPE)

Playing the role of social auditor, GCNPE has:

- Designed a survey that assesses whether supplies sent from the Ministry of Education reach schools
- Uses achievement data from Dirección General de Evaluación e Investigación Educativa (DIGEDUCA) in order to compare learning progress in math and reading comprehension

14. ASIES has various publications that provide details about the GCNPE; MOMENTO is one of its regular publications.

Guatemala	Colegio de Maestros de Guatemala	CMG
	Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Educación de Guatemala	STEG
Dominican Republic	Asociación Dominicana de Profesores	ADP
	Asociación Nacional de Profesionales y Técnicos de la Educación	ANPROTED
	Coalición Educación Digna (Coalition of ADP and ANPROTED)	

Source: "Teachers' Unions Worldwide," <http://www.globaleducation.org/unions.htm>

NATIONAL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Parents in Central America have been key actors in the policy of holding teachers accountable to communities. Programs like PROHECO and PRONADE have devolved authority to communities, granting professional autonomy to schools and teachers in the belief that the increased accountability would lead to higher teacher quality, teacher attendance, and student outcomes. Teachers in these programs did not enjoy union protection. Parents monitored teachers and paid their salaries. Program evaluations have found that teacher attendance in these schools was considerably higher than in other public schools: teachers showed up more often and worked full school days.

CONCLUSIONS

In this section, the evaluation team has provided an overview of the political-economic context of the three countries visited, describing major educational challenges and reforms, and outlining the link that exists between political actors and education reform in Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic. The team also explored the way donors and CSOs engage with the education sector in each of the three case countries. In all three cases, we found that:

- Considerable variation exists in the financing approaches taken by the main international donors to each country's sector plan. Not all donors have committed to sector-level financing, direct budgetary support, or the pooling of resources.
- CSO-government relationships tend to vary across the three countries visited. Although all sector plans mention the value of stakeholder participation, none of the sector plans reviewed provided clear frameworks or benchmarks for civil society consultation and engagement in national policy settings. This gap in the documentation reviewed suggests that, in practice, governments likely have the ultimate say over who gets invited to the policy table, and for which purposes.
- Civil society actors have recognized a valuable role for donors and international nongovernmental actors in helping them play new policy roles through technical assistance, ensuring more meaningful policy dialogue between government and civil society on issues of national and local development.
- Education reform advocacy organizations or coalitions have had an active role in education advocacy in the countries visited. While the organizations' main focus has been on a critical issue such as the financing of education—especially in the case of the Dominican Republic, less emphasis has been on accountability for student achievement, improved teacher quality or turning around failing schools. The existing advocacy agenda focused on learning outcomes is nascent, which poses both a challenge and a promise for USAID's early grade reading strategy.

As illustrated by the policy analysis of the three countries visited, the specific context in each country defined opportunities as well as constraints in policy implementation. Interventions such as USAID's reading-focused strategy will need to be context specific to gain the requisite support of the various

stakeholders for the activities being developed. In developing its agenda related to reading improvement in the region, the Agency may consider the following recommendations.

- USAID bilateral agreements with government partners should reflect the need for long-term systemic education reform, potentially addressing broader challenges (such as instructional time) that impact reading improvement, and support actions that make that reform possible.
- Since high first-grade repetition rates in the region indicate serious challenges for effective reading acquisition, USAID's policies and initiatives could address that challenge specifically (such as instructional time for reading, teacher assignment policies for greater teacher stability in the classroom, improved first grade curriculum, specific support to pedagogical improvement in first grade, supplemental reading materials and resources, etc.).
- Capacities in assessment are building in the region. USAID might explore policies and initiatives that will more clearly link assessment results to school and instructional improvement as a tool to improve reading achievement.
- Decentralization brings with it the strengths and weaknesses that local education officials and organizations exhibit. Specific work on capacity building to deliver effective reading instruction for these stakeholders with increased educational responsibilities could be an important component of USAID technical assistance, cooperating with both national and local governments and educational officials to deliver quality education.
- USAID could support MINED or other donors in taking steps to coordinate early grade reading activities funded by various external donors in the region, promoting efficient use of donor resources targeted toward reading improvement.
- The continued encouragement and support of civil society involvement in promoting reading improvement both within and outside of schools should be a component of USAID's ongoing programming.

As stated above, the Partnership for Education Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) has been one of the main USAID-funded education activities in the region. Given the larger educational context provided in Section 1, Section 2 focuses specifically on PREAL's achievements in certain program areas and seeks to understand how these achievements might inform future USAID reading strategy activities in the region.

SECTION 2: EFFECTIVENESS OF PREAL

INTRODUCTION

The PREAL program was established in 1995 by the Inter-American Dialogue and the *Corporación de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo* (Corporation for Development Research or CINDE). The overall goal of PREAL is to promote high-quality education in LAC by: (1) involving civil society in education reform; (2) monitoring progress toward improving education; and (3) enriching the thinking of decision-makers and opinion leaders about education policy. PREAL has not had an explicit focus on reading policy, acquisition, instruction, or achievement. However, since its activities are aimed at improving education policy and practice, an assessment of PREAL can contribute to the development of reading policy in the region. PREAL has four key programs, discussed in this report¹⁵: Education Report Cards, Best Practices in Education, the Strategic Partnerships in Central America Program, and the Business Education Program. Each activity contributes to the global objective of informing the public, education decision-makers, and key organizations about education issues as a means to seek solutions for improvement. This objective is supported through activities that build demand and transparency, help get new education policies on the agenda, and establish new educational priorities.

Unlike previous evaluations that assessed PREAL programs as a whole, this evaluation seeks to specifically evaluate two PREAL activities. The 2006 PREAL evaluation recommended that PREAL should “use its impressive capacities to develop and promote strategies, frameworks, and information in support of effective policy application—theory to practice,” and that “PREAL should make a concerted effort wherever it is active to expand outreach and diversify its networks beyond its current networks.” A five-year agreement provided new activities to address these recommendations: (a) Strategic Partnerships Program, and (b) Phase II of the existing Business-Education Alliance Program, among other activities. The assessment team for this report was asked to highlight lessons that might be drawn from PREAL’s experience in these two activities to inform the design of future education policy work at USAID, with an emphasis on their relation to the reading strategy.

The section begins by evaluating these PREAL program components and related impacts since 2006. It then turns to PREAL partners and explores their experiences as policy actors in each country. Finally, the team explores selected PREAL activities evaluated in 2006 that continue to influence policy outcomes. By understanding the impact PREAL has on policy outcomes in several LAC countries, the Agency can seek opportunities to working with key stakeholders to affect reading outcomes with PREAL and its partners.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM¹⁶

In 2007, PREAL developed a Strategic Partnerships Program to support and advise organizations in Central America and the Caribbean in carrying out concrete proposals for policy reform in their respective countries. After a thorough, region-wide search, PREAL selected five out of a total of 16 short-listed projects: one each in Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala, and two related projects, with a single partner, in Honduras.¹⁷ The five projects are in Table 7.

15. PREAL also has other programs that are not central to this report.

16. This section draws extensively on the PREAL document “Summary of Bus-Ed and SP Impacts,” March 28, 2012. See also PREAL – Bases para la formulación y presentación de propuestas, Octubre 2007.” Summaries of the five successful projects are available on the PREAL website.

17. The original intention was to fund more of the 16 proposals, but budget cuts by USAID cut the available funding in half.

Table 7: Strategic Partnerships Program's Participants

Country	Program	Implementer
Honduras	Education Policy Reform for Quality and Efficiency in Honduras <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design standards for teacher evaluation ▪ Design a basic education investment and community engagement strategy at the local level 	Fundación para la Educación Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu (FEREMA)
Guatemala	Supporting Informed Dialogue on Second Generation	FLASCO-Guatemala and Technical Advisory Committee
Dominican Republic	Quality School Management Model	EDUCA, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), and Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM)
Panama	Improving educational leadership in Panama's schools	Consejo del Sector Privado para la Asistencia Educacional (COSPAE)

The projects in Guatemala, Dominican Republic, and Panama were completed in 2010, while certain activities in Honduras were extended through 2012 due in part to temporary suspensions following political crisis and to their widespread success. The following sections describe the concrete results that were achieved through each partnership. By strengthening the capacity of education managers and teachers to be effective, and expanding its reach to marginalized populations, it appears that PREAL strengthened the overall chances of success at the country level for attaining any future Goal 1 activities.

HONDURAS

PREAL's Strategic Partnerships Program in Honduras included the Education Policy Reform for Quality and Efficiency, which aimed to assess teacher performance and foster greater efficiency in education investments at the municipal level.

The first subproject focused on designing and piloting a process for assessing teacher performance. Beginning with a draft manual prepared by the Honduran General Directorate for the Evaluation of Quality Education (DIGECE), a joint FEREMA–Ministry of Education (MINED) committee used PREAL's best practices materials to develop preliminary performance standards and validate them with a group of teachers and principals. Its efforts led to a national training manual on teacher evaluation standards currently being used by the government.

The goal of the second effort was to strengthen local government and community involvement in education by increasing the relevance and efficiency of local-level school management, enhancing coordination with the central government, and more effectively reaching marginalized, rural populations. FEREMA identified best practices in local education management in 12 municipalities and worked closely with three of them to develop a model for local-state relations. By the time of the arrival of the current study's field team in late February 2012, the project had expanded to 40 municipalities with concrete plans for early expansion to 120 municipalities.

The project has had widespread impact. It reached the national level when Honduran President Porfirio Lobo expressed his desire to expand the model to additional municipalities throughout the country. FEREMA helped push the government toward a major focus on education, starting with a new legal

framework. Two years of work on the policy framework resulted in the approval of two laws: the new Fundamental Education Law in 2012; and the national Law to Strengthen Public Education and Community Participation, passed in mid-2011 to empower and encourage the participation of civil society and the community in educational reform. PREAL, through its partners, was actively involved in the development of both of the new laws.

The project, which adds an important new player—local government—to the current mix of the MINED and teachers unions in the delivery of education services in the pilot areas, has been replicated on a larger scale. Currently, through its partners, PREAL is providing ongoing support to municipalities and the technical teams working with the Honduran vice president and the MINED to implement both laws.

PREAL and its partners were also instrumental in establishing a prize for excellence in the management of municipal education that is run and sustained by a coalition of seven Honduran governmental and non-governmental organizations. The award generates initiatives that have widespread buy-in among local entities, giving programs a higher likelihood of success and sustainability.

PREAL's and FEREMA's success in implementing the Education Policy Reform for Quality and Efficiency has clear implications for potential reading policy activities in the region, with its focus on teacher standards and community involvement. The existing teacher standard manuals and assessment processes could be adapted to focus more specifically on reading improvement, and the community participation model might also be a source for the delivery of reading promotion activities at the local level.

GUATEMALA

PREAL's strategic partnership in Guatemala aimed to bring together divergent viewpoints on controversial topics to promote national dialogue and build consensus around key education challenges—all basic requirements for effective policy implementation that had been sorely lacking previously in the divisive political atmosphere in the country. To achieve this objective, a technical advisory committee consisting of implementing partner FLACSO-Guatemala and representatives from PRODESSA, CIEN and ASIES identified three priorities for improving the quality of education in the country: teacher training, school management, and multicultural/multilingual education. They then organized a series of 20 national dialogues with teachers, students, parents and educational authorities, and produced four papers on each subject, 12 in total.

The project culminated with a comprehensive summary produced in 2010 that identified several areas of consensus that had emerged through the events and papers, including widespread agreement that the country's "normal school" system of teacher training needed reform. The project successfully framed the debate on the three key education priorities, which were ultimately placed on the national legislative agendas. Several teachers' unions have joined civil-society groups in advocating for legislation requiring some degree of university-level education for all teachers.

Concerning this Strategic Partnership, Francisco Cabrera, a member of the Technical Advisory Committee who became vice-minister of education in 2009, stated: "This project has helped lay the groundwork for future policy dialogue that, to date, has been particularly difficult in Guatemala." Additionally, constructive discussions on policies among stakeholders have enabled additional dialogue on programs and curricula implementation, which can build cohesive national standards that further literacy and numeracy skills, and equalize achievement across the country.

PREAL's work fostering national dialogue and consensus in Guatemala provides important lessons for the potential development of reading policy activities in the country and region at large. The "Reading Wars" that have been at play historically in the United States illustrate the ongoing debates that exist among educators in regards to adequate reading instruction, curriculum, materials, and outcomes. Also, debates about the best models of reading instruction and development in multilingual societies such as

Guatemala are prevalent in the LAC region. These environmental characteristics suggest that USAID may need to draw on existing models to foster dialogue and build consensus as one step in the creation of reading policies in the region.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The school management project built on earlier PREAL support to the MINED to design and test a quality school management model that had received initial support in a project funded by USAID. The model developed was piloted in schools in three districts and involved developing a local strategic plan for quality improvement based on Ministry guidance and training local staff in carrying it out. The model and outcomes were fully owned by the local and district authorities and integrated into the daily operation of schools within two years. The success of the initial phase prompted the government to implement the project in five more districts, with additional funding from USAID. The project also contributed to the inclusion of decentralized models of education and community participation as key features of a recent “social contract” between civil society and government, enhancing the likelihood that the new model will be sustained and perhaps replicated.

The project generated vigorous public discussion and praise from the Minister of Education for the development of a minimum “market basket” needed for a Dominican school to generate high levels of student learning and providing the Ministry and schools with a planning aid.

PANAMA

The goal of PREAL’s partner, the Private Sector Council for Educational Assistance, was to build leadership capacity in the educational system, both at district and school levels, in terms of strengthening the management and supervisory skills of principals as well as district and regional education officials. COSPAE worked to create alliances with strategic actors in the system to be able to analyze how to overcome weaknesses in leadership in support of decentralization. With more responsibilities moving to the local level, educators there need improved administrative and pedagogical skills.

Outcomes of the Panamanian program on improving educational leadership in schools include:

- The development of performance standards for school principals and supervisors, and applied training in three education districts in conjunction with the MINED.
- The production of a training model that shifts the focus of management towards quality and learning.
- A decision by the Minister of Education to incorporate the model into the 2010 hiring and training process for new regional directors and for other new senior operations personnel.

BUSINESS-EDUCATION ALLIANCE¹⁸ PROGRAM

PREAL started working with business groups on education issues in the mid-1990s, with formal operations beginning through an agreement with the Avina Foundation in 2001. At that time, most business-education alliances had a narrow approach to their roles in shaping policy agendas and focused their efforts on programs such as adopting schools or providing supplies. Although some business-based foundations and networks had a strong sense of national corporate social responsibility, few worked together to change policy. In the succeeding years, national counterparts including but not limited to FEREMA, the National Center for Economic Research (CIEN), EDUCA, and COSPAE, with assistance from PREAL, worked to strengthen these national alliances and involve them more directly and strategically in education reform efforts.

18. This section includes excerpts from PREAL document “Summary of Bus-ed and SP Impacts,” March 28, 2012.

In 2007, with Phase II financial support from USAID, PREAL contracted with *Fundación DIS* (DIS Foundation) of Colombia to establish and support the Business-Education Alliance Program/ *Programa Alianzas Empresa & Educación* (PAEE) to foster a regional network of national alliances and provide them with support, training, and technical assistance. PAEE was also designed to provide linkages to similar efforts elsewhere and to the Corporate Social Responsibility network.

Under the Phase II program, PREAL continued to strengthen the national alliances (see Table 8) with emphasis on their active participation in advocacy coalitions and increased focus on policy implementation.¹⁹

Table 8: Participants of the PAEE

Country	Alliance	Website
Honduras	FEREMA with the Comité de Educación del Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada (COHEP)	http://www.ferema.org , https://www.cohep.com
Guatemala	Empresarios por la Educación	http://www.empresariosporlaeducacion.org
Dominican Republic	EDUCA with the Comité de Empresarios por la Educación	https://www.facebook.com/educa.sd
El Salvador	Empresarios por la Educación de FEPADE	http://www.fepade.org.sv
Nicaragua	EDUQUEMOS with the Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada (COSEP) and ExE Empresarios por la Educación	http://eduquemos.org.ni/ , http://www.cosep.org.ni ; https://www.facebook.com/pages/Empresarios-por-la-Educaci%C3%B3n-ExE-Nicaragua/301730999877635
Panama	Unidos por la Educación (evolved from ties to COSPAE and the Círculo Empresarial)	http://www.unidosporlaeducacion.com/

Documented results of the program to-date include:

HONDURAS

- The Honduran Minister of Education and several important business leaders attended a meeting on public-private educational partnerships co-organized by the PAEE and PREAL's national partner, FEREMA. Through events like these, the PAEE develops potentially valuable links between policymakers and business leaders that are crucial to improving workforce readiness and empowering the private demand for quality public education.
- The director of the planning, evaluation, and development unit of the Honduran MINED noted that he used data from the PREAL Working Paper *Quality of Education and Economic Growth* to convince a group of businessmen from northern Honduras that increasing investment in early childhood education was a strategic way to show corporate social responsibility. This demonstrates that in addition to helping business leaders connect with education policymakers, PREAL's programs enable policymakers to build support in the business community for needed reforms.

19. See "Propuesta de Asociación entre PREAL y la Fundación DIS para coordinar el Programa Empresa/Educación del PREAL," March 2008, available on the PREAL website. See also the work plan for March 2011 to February 2012 titled "Propuesta de Asociación Coordinación del Programa Alianzas Empresa-Educación (PAEE) PREAL-Fundación DIS, February 2011.

GUATEMALA

- PREAL's business-education partner in Guatemala, *Empresarios por la Educación* (Business Leaders for Education, ExE), hosted a conference for business-education leaders from throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic to share best practices in business-education efforts. Both the president and minister of education of Guatemala addressed the more than 90 participants. At the conclusion of the conference, the Central American, Dominican, and Mexican business-education groups, along with PREAL, signed a joint statement committing them to support several key education reforms. PREAL's national business-education partners have developed a growing presence in the region and increasingly exert their influence at the highest levels of the policymaking process.
- Following the release of several studies indicating that the teaching profession was significantly undervalued by the Guatemalan public, *Empresarios por la Educación* established and administered the "100-Point Teacher Prize" to recognize great teachers and their innovative efforts to improve learning in the classroom.
- *Empresarios por la Educación* also fulfilled a request from the Minister of Education to comment on the framework for Guatemala's education policy for 2008–2012. These cases demonstrate that PREAL has helped to establish strong links between policymakers and business leaders, thus creating public support for policy implementation and enabling more effective application of education policies to the needs of the private sector.
- PREAL's business-education partners are often asked to advise policymakers. For example, *Empresarios por la Educación* gave a presentation to the education commission of the Guatemalan Congress in which it highlighted the need for reforms in teacher training, standards and assessment systems, and bilingual education. Members of the commission then committed themselves to addressing the political motives behind appointments made by the Ministry of Education and improving the quality of education by addressing the lack of workforce readiness of the graduates of the diversified secondary schools.
- The Guatemalan alliance program also launched local business-education chapters outside the capital city to work with local schools and district leaders.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

- In the Dominican Republic, a consortium of separate groups, including several PREAL business-education partners, joined forces to push for higher public investment in education and to support ongoing efforts in education reform. PREAL's partners also collaborated with outside actors to draft a document that all of the country's presidential candidates signed and which, among other education objectives, commits them to complying with a law designating four percent of GDP to education. Additionally, through ongoing collaboration among PREAL, business groups, academic institutions, and the Secretariat of Education, partners developed a "market-basket" index, based on optimal per-pupil expenditures designed to aid resource allocation and planning.
- According to EDUCA, PAEE has had a positive impact on the National Council for Private Business (CONEP), the principal business-education alliance in the Dominican Republic, and has significantly strengthened relations between the two institutions. A new working agreement was recently signed and approved by the governing councils of both organizations.

PANAMA

- PREAL's partner in Panama, COSPAE, partnered with the MINED to develop the Executives for Excellence in Education (E3) program, through which it matched volunteer business coaches with

school leaders to provide management training. PREAL and COSPAE later expanded the project into a Strategic Partnership, through which 99 principals and 23 supervisors received managerial training.

- PREAL worked with a Panamanian partner, the National Union of Private Education Centers (UNCEP), and a coalition of other civil society actors to create the *Unidos por la Educación* initiative. Joining PREAL and UNCEP were PREAL partner COSPAE, the Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUDESPA), the National Enterprise Council (CONEP) and the Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Agriculture in Panama (CCIAP). Formed in July 2011, *Unidos* is a civil society-led effort to bring together broad sectors of Panamanian society behind a common education agenda. By mobilizing a broad range of groups and energizing civil society leaders to press for educational improvement, *Unidos* seeks to make education policy a national priority and deepen institutional change. Education Minister Molinar has expressed her support for the initiative and her desire to work with the group to identify ways to decrease the country's dropout rate.
- The Vice-Minister of Education of Panama requested that members of the Business-Education Alliance put her in contact with the Minister of Education of Colombia and provide information on various business-education partnerships. The alliance was able to connect her to a valuable network of other actors with a track record of successful business-education partnerships.

In related work, *Empresarios por la Educación* in Nicaragua formed a commission of all prior ministers of education to bring expert knowledge to pressing policy issues. In Colombia, PREAL partners *Fundación Empresarios por la Educación* and the Corona Foundation, in cooperation with several other national and international organizations, have developed their own series of report cards in 16 departments/states. The Report Cards are based on the model developed initially by PREAL and its partners in 2005 in six departments, and are now run and sustained entirely by national actors. The Colombians have used the reports to discuss education issues in conjunction with local and state elections.

In another instance, three organizations—the Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility (FUNDHARSE) and FEREMA in Honduras, and the American Chamber of Commerce in El Salvador—used materials from PAEE in meetings designed to convince business leaders that they should support efforts to improve primary education. National business leaders spoke to almost 100 of their peers about ways that they could take part in education reform efforts.

If these examples are indicators of things to come, they may be seen as encouraging. The partnerships have demonstrated that they have the capacity to work productively on a range of activities at the national level. Business groups have been active in building coalitions, in forming strategic partnerships, and in fostering change. To continue to be successful, the partnerships will need to encourage national alliances to learn from one other, as well as to ultimately facilitate real change at the policy and practice level.

The examples of PREAL's work fostering private-public links focused on educational reform in the region provide a backdrop for future work focused specifically on reading improvement. High-level reading literacy skills are essential for success in the modern workforce in the region. As such, the private sector seems an obvious partner in the promotion of reading improvement.

PREAL'S NATIONAL COUNTERPARTS

National counterparts are the backbone of PREAL's extensive institutional networks. Some of the national counterparts involved in PREAL's work include, but are not limited to, FEREMA (Honduras), CIEN (Guatemala), EDUCA (Dominican Republic), FEPADE (El Salvador), and COSPAE (Panama—a country that is not part of the USAID education portfolio). All are strong, well-regarded, and active and effective players in education reform analysis, advocacy, and action. In these small countries, with even

smaller groups of intellectual and professional elites, they are the leading sources of advice and assistance in educational matters and are seated at most tables where education matters are discussed. All work closely with PREAL in developing projects to which PREAL frequently provides both funding and other broad support, ranging from technical assistance to involvement in international dialogue. All provide their own support and technical leadership to local business-education alliances. CIEN, in fact, hosts the Secretariat of *Empresarios por la Educación*, the leading business-education alliance in Guatemala. CIEN also sponsors PREAL working groups on education management and teachers. Together with PREAL/Washington, some of these counterparts coordinate the research and publication of the national Report Cards, which have become key tools for education policy discussion and mobilization around education themes (discussed later in the section) in their respective countries. These national counterparts will likely be key collaborators in future USAID-funded activities aimed at reading improvement.

OTHER INSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKING

In addition to these major players, PREAL has worked or is currently working on projects with a wide range of organizations. These include FLACSO-DR, *Foro Educativo Nicaragüense* (or EDUQUEMOS, Nicaragua's institution for private investors in education), *Fundación Omar Dengo* (Costa Rica), UNCEP (*Unión Nacional de Centros Educativos Particulares*), the DIS Foundation, (Colombia), CaPRI (Caribbean Policy Research Institute-Jamaica), *Instituto de Desarrollo* (Development Institute-Paraguay), *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo* (Group for the Analysis of Development-GRADE-Peru), the Center for Research and Social Education Action (CIASES, in Nicaragua), and United for Education in Panama.

Additionally, there are collaborative projects that do not involve transfer of funds with UNESCO/OREALC and UNESCO UIS, the Lemann Foundation (Brazil), the Chile Foundation, and CECC/SICA (Costa Rica). In the recent past, activities have been developed and funded with FLACSO/Guatemala, the Center for the Implementation of Public Policy Promoting Equity and Growth (*Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento* or CIPPEC, in Argentina), the *Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra* (PUCMM, in the DR), *Universidad ORT* (Uruguay), FLACSO/Argentina, and the FARO Group and *Fundación Ecuador* (Ecuador). Although these are no longer active, the connections built with these organizations allow for the possibility of future partnerships.²⁰

PREAL's counterparts and associated business-education alliance have been regular and active participants in the work of national coalitions. The counterparts have strengthened these civil society organizations (CSOs) and, in sum, the coalitions are demonstrating that they are well-trained, knowledgeable about the problems, and have familiarity with the literature and other sources of information related to education issues. They are among a new generation of education actors, which also includes, in the smaller numbers, the ministries of education.

As the table below illustrates, PREAL and its national counterparts have influenced policy in several countries. Some notable examples are provided below.

Table 9: Combined Impact of PREAL and National Counterparts on Education Policy

Country	PREAL and National Counterparts' contributions
Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped shape Honduras' new Fundamental Education Law through models, recommendations, and data produced via the strategic partnership, Report Cards, and other PREAL publications.

20. The above examples have been drawn from interviews and materials consulted by the team during its field work and additional materials provided subsequently by PREAL and the major national counterparts.

Country	PREAL and National Counterparts' contributions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advised the Vice President in the development of the Work Plan for the Education Sector for 2010–2014, which was designed in accord with Plan Education For All/Fast Track Initiative goals. These plans and goals represent the government's commitments to achieving education results during its time in office. The German Agency for International Development/ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) funded the printing and distribution of the document.
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Established, together with the local business-education alliance, the “100-Point Teacher Prize” in Guatemala to recognize outstanding teachers and their innovative efforts to improve learning. ▪ Helped persuade the education commission of the Guatemalan Congress to begin considering two pieces of legislation that would tackle the politicization of ministerial appointments and the lack of workforce readiness of high school graduates. ▪ Advised the MINED in Guatemala, including comments on the framework for Guatemala's education policy for 2008–2012 and on the responsibilities of the National Education Council. ▪ Participated actively in the alliance among the private sector, international organizations, and the Guatemalan government that set the stage for broader civil society influence in education policy.
Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed studies and publications that were utilized in the Ministry of Education Science and Technology's curriculum redesign efforts, which emphasized the evaluation of teacher education curricula in the country's universities. ▪ Produced a video that contributed to the signing of the Policy and Social Commitment for Education document, one of the subscribers to which was the newly elected president. The video was produced by a group of young people about the education situation in the Dominican Republic. It was based on the first country Report Card and was a significant factor in the launching of the <i>Coalición Educación Digna</i> in the lead-up to the recent elections. ▪ Persuaded all 10 of the 2012 presidential candidates to sign the Political and Social Pledge for Education. Signatories committed to implementing a law that allocates four percent of GDP to education. Enacted in 1997, this law has never been fulfilled.²¹ ▪ Conducted a study that was used by the education roundtable working on the Participative Anti-Corruptions Initiative (IPAC). This study, funded by the SPP, examined the minimum costs of a quality education in the Dominican Republic and resulted in financial support from the European Union, World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). One of the working groups of this project is dedicated to education.

21. The Inter-American Dialogue on June 4, 2012 made its first Award for Civic Engagement to “Coalición Educación Digna (the advocacy coalition behind the four percent movement in the DR).”

Country	PREAL and National Counterparts' contributions
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Persuaded the Panamanian government to establish a national student achievement test and to participate in UNESCO's Latin America-wide 2006 Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE). ▪ Inspired a model of school superintendent competencies, which was incorporated into the agenda of the MINED of Panama. ▪ Worked with Panamanian business-education partners to establish and position United for Education (<i>Unidos por la Educación</i>), a broad coalition of civil society leaders pushing for better education, as a credible voice in the policy debate. PREAL has helped <i>Unidos</i> organize and finance participation by noted Latin American experts at several high-profile events (including an international conference on best practices in recruiting and retaining talented teachers and developing effective school leaders, held in cooperation with PREAL's working group on the teaching profession).

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PREAL IN THE CENTRAL AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

In the course of its field work, the team became aware of a perception expressed by a number of interviewees that PREAL's presence in the region has recently diminished. When this perception was shared with PREAL, the response was that it is accurate and reflects staff reductions and other budget cuts in both Washington and Santiago. These changes were designed to stretch the available funds and to apply the savings to the local institutions and their work.

The team believes that future PREAL agreements would benefit from an increased focus on institutionalizing PREAL in the region. Doing so would be a further step in what has been a sustained process over many years of building local capacities, leading to the present circumstance where counterparts are increasingly able to undertake activities with less facilitation on the part of PREAL, a sign of PREAL's positive impact on capacity building in the region. PREAL has already assigned additional responsibilities to key partners, such as transferring the education management working group to CIEN.²² With this in mind, institutionalizing PREAL in the region will require the organization to expand upon its repertoire of activities. Given USAID's new focus on reading, pursuing new activities related more specifically to reading policy and programming might be a possible strategic change for PREAL.

PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED PREAL ACTIVITIES

Other PREAL activities evaluated as successful in 2006, such as Best Practices, Working Groups, and Report Cards, continue to be extensively used and valued by a variety of actors to promote education reform in the region.

BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

The Best Practices in Education Program is the channel through which PREAL disseminates information and research regarding programs and policies that have proven to be effective. Through the Best Practices program, PREAL has carried out various projects, including the creation of a database with more than 100 exemplary programs and policies along with various seminars and workshops. This program also has published education reform briefs, known as the *Best Practices Series*, and a book, *Best Practices for Improving Education in Latin America*. These documents are part of PREAL's larger publication and conferences programming, which have received high praise in prior PREAL evaluations. Building

22. The Working Group on Standards and Evaluation remains in the capable hands of GRADE (Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo or Group for the Analysis of Development) in Peru.

upon the Best Practices in Education database to offer a description of exemplary programs aimed at reading improvement is an obvious connection to current USAID education efforts in the region.

WORKING GROUPS

PREAL's Working Groups have been a key mechanism for involving leading professionals in the design, promotion and, through technical assistance, implementation of education reforms in priority areas. Some significant achievements of the working groups are listed below.

THE WORKING GROUP ON STANDARDS AND EVALUATION:

- Convinced the Vice-Minister of Education in Peru to change his position and begin the process of establishing national learning standards.
- Contributed to government decisions which established learning standards in Honduras and Guatemala.
- Convinced the Minister of Education in Panama to participate, for the first time, in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a global student achievement test.
- Provided technical input into the 2006 law that created the Institute for Basic Education Assessment, Accreditation and Certification (*Instituto Peruano de Evaluación, Acreditación y Certificación de la Calidad de la Educación Básica* or IPEBA) in Peru that is charged with monitoring the quality of K-12 education and worked closely with that group in implementing its mandate.
- Helped the MINED in Guatemala establish a National System of Educational Research and Evaluation.

THE WORKING GROUP ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION:

- Supported the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe (OREALC) in developing its initiative to improve the teaching profession in Latin America by providing them with analysis and recommendations developed by the teaching profession working group over nearly six years.
- Helped develop and support teacher recognition awards in Guatemala, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil.
- Advised the President and Minister of Education in Ecuador on teacher policy. This has since produced some of the region's most advanced legislation on teacher performance assessment and on limiting the right to strike during school hours.
- Enriched national analyses and presented recommendations to MINEDs on how to strengthen the teaching profession in four Central American countries. The Central American and Dominican Chapter of PREAL's Working Group on the Teaching Profession (CCAD/GTD), in cooperation with CECC/SICA (*Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana/Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*, in English, the Educational and Cultural Coordination of the Central American Integration System) and UNESCO's regional office on Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO/OREALC), held seven international meetings in 2012 – Costa Rica (March 13–14), Honduras (April 18), Panama (May 30), the Dominican Republic (June 1), Nicaragua (June 5), El Salvador (June 7), and Guatemala (August 22-23). These workshops offered participants an opportunity to discuss the implications of international experience for their own national policies and share best practices and recommendations to improve the teaching profession with academics, teachers, civil society leaders, representatives of MINEDs, international organizations, and teachers' unions. They were designed to stimulate national dialogue and consensus on implementing needed policy changes. Three similar conferences in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador were scheduled for June and July of 2012.

THE WORKING GROUP ON SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS:

- Helped to lay the groundwork for future reforms, by bringing together experts and identifying key obstacles to improving management, including the need to establish clear roles for different actors at different levels and to balance more local control with central oversight and policy guidance. It has raised the profile of these issues through events in cooperation with national partners. The group has also identified core references and potential working group members and explored opportunities for coordination with CECC/SICA to provide materials and expertise to Central American ministers of education over 2012.
- Supported PREAL's study tour program through two tours that focused on improving management and reform. Although these tours only started in early 2012, initial results suggest that they will have an impact on policy implementation in participants' home countries. For example, a recent workshop on school leadership and management in El Salvador drew on the experience of the two Salvadoran participants in PREAL's January 2012 study tour to Toronto and included vigorous discussion among government officials and civil society actors at many levels of the education system. The study tour participants noted ways in which they are already modifying their management to incorporate lessons learned during the study tour.
- Initiated the development and promotion of a series of specific policy recommendations on school management and leadership.
- Provided access to new knowledge and research on best practices in education to Latin American education leaders, as well as offered a forum through which policy decisions could be made and put into practice. This model might be replicated as a tool to foster reading improvement in the region.

REPORT CARDS

The Report Cards have become a potent accountability instrument used to promote policy dialogue and decision-making among education stakeholders. The major impact of Report Cards has been to provide a standard against which to measure progress on a national level and, in so doing, promote accountability on the part of governments, MINEDs, school directors, teachers, parents, and communities. They also have served as an instrument of advice and suggestions on steps to take to improve the education system and learning outcomes. A recent study (McKinsey, 2009) found that a high-profile and critical report about system performance is a powerful source to "ignite" school system reform. Expanding upon current Report Cards to focus more specifically on key reading-related curricula, instructional practices, and student achievement (for example, analyzing a reporting data on sub-skills in reading such as vocabulary and fluency, rather than providing aggregate reading achievement scores) could support USAID's reading improvement goals for the region.

CONCLUSIONS

In this section, the evaluation team set out to describe outcomes of PREAL programs in creating strategic partnerships and in moving forward with the alliances between business and education stakeholders. In keeping with the two programs, the team can characterize PREAL activities as contributing to education reform in two distinct ways:

1. By defining and shedding light on key issues to improve education quality, and
2. By empowering national counterparts to work to encourage and pressure government to make positive changes.

These two types of contribution draw on the full range of PREAL's technical repertoire of activities (best practices, working groups, publications, report cards). The team notes that quite distinctive

experiences have unfolded in the countries studied. How these different experiences have played out is discussed below.

In Honduras, the Strategic Partnership Program's efforts led to several important outcomes, including the creation of a national training manual on teacher evaluation standards currently being used by the government. The use of established best practices and the ability to work with government were key requirements to a successful implementation of the program. The program also helped strengthen local government and community involvement in education by increasing the relevance and efficiency of local-level school management, enhancing coordination with the central government and more effectively reaching marginalized, rural populations.

In the Dominican Republic, school management projects contributed to inclusion of decentralized models of education and community participation as key features of a recent "social contract" between CSOs and government. As previously stated, these initiatives also led to the creation and implementation of two laws: a new fundamental education law and a complementary piece of legislation to empower and encourage the participation of civil society in educational reform.

In Guatemala, through a technical advisory committee, the program brought together divergent viewpoints on controversial topics to promote national dialogue and build consensus around key education challenges.

OVERALL

Through the Business-Education Alliance Program, PREAL has helped the countries studied to establish strong links between policymakers and business leaders, thus creating public support for policy implementation and enabling more effective application of education policies.

The team also found that a broad range of other activities undertaken by PREAL and discussed in previous evaluations continue to influence policy outcomes in the region. PREAL's program of research, publications, and workshops has supported both these alliance partners as well as others advocating educational reform. PREAL's support of technical working groups and the *pasantías* for young professionals, work in producing regional and country-level Report Cards, and documentation of best practices have provided important tools and resources for both CSOs and governments involved in articulating policy change.

PREAL's national counterparts proved to be strong, well-regarded, and active and effective players in education reform analysis, advocacy, and action. They were the leading sources of advice and assistance in educational matters and were seated at most tables where education matters were discussed. To some extent, they all worked with their ministries of education to press for improving educational outcomes. PREAL's impact offers examples of roles, programs and opportunities for other civil society organizations and the Agency to support the education systems in Latin American nations, with an eye to improved reading instruction and achievement.

Section 2 illustrates the influence that PREAL has had on education policy and reform in the region since 2006 and proposes possible ways in which the lessons of its successes for USAID strategy could be applied to a focus on improved literacy. Section 3 reviews existing education policy and reform activities in the region for draw out lessons that can inform future USAID activities, moving beyond PREAL to broader reform activities in countries within and without the USAID portfolio.

SECTION 3: EDUCATION POLICYMAKING IN LATIN AMERICA: A REVIEW OF POLICY MODALITIES

INTRODUCTION

To understand what makes a particular education policy effective, it is important to first understand the entire policy process, that is, “how policy changes are introduced, approved, and implemented and how reformers manage this process as it unfolds over time” (Grindle, 2007). The purpose of this section is to identify and describe policymaking and implementation processes that various countries in the LAC region have employed in order to inform future efforts. Additionally, this review aims to guide recommendations of specific policymaking activities that USAID might adopt in collaboration with partner countries to improve early grade reading.

This section examines a number of noteworthy education policies, reforms and examples of the different processes and types of activities undertaken to design and implement education policy. It starts by describing conceptual models of education policymaking and defining the concept of policy modalities. It then analyzes the policy modalities used to make and implement policy in four areas relevant to early grade reading and where policy implementation appears to have been successful (teachers, administration and finance, curriculum, and access). Finally, it offers key lessons for the formulation of early grade reading policy in LAC.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To guide this review of actual education policymaking in LAC, it is useful to first examine some common conceptual frameworks of policymaking. Numerous frameworks of policymaking relevant to education exist. Most share similar components but differ in the ways in which those components are expected to interact. A well-known stage framework of the policy process was put forth by Haddad and Demsky (1995), who established seven key steps to policymaking: (1) analysis of the existing situation; (2) generation of policy options; (3) evaluation of policy options; (4) making policy decisions; (5) planning policy implementation; (6) policy impact assessment; and (7) subsequent policy cycles. In their book *Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries*, Cummings and Williams (2005) state that other frameworks of policymaking (such as one described by Grindle and Thomas, 1991) vary slightly, but largely share the same stages put forth by Haddad and Demsky.

Other frameworks of policymaking eschew the neat, sequential perspective of policymaking and put forth messy, dynamic perspectives that perhaps more realistically reflect the way in which education policymaking occurs. For example, in his seminal book on U.S. policymaking, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, Kingdon (2003) proposes the “garbage can” framework, a title that creatively describes the untidy and interactive nature of the policymaking process as the joining of three streams. Kingdon argues that “the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics.” Put in the context of education, change likely occurs when a problem is clearly identified, when the proposal meets the criteria for serious consideration to respond to the identified problem, and when the political climate is conducive to supporting attention being paid to the problem as well as the proposed solution.

Although Kingdon’s work drew on the U.S. context, researchers studying educational change and policymaking in the developing world where USAID works put forth similar, dynamic change models. For example, Gillies (2010) argues that education systems change “based on the interaction among three major dimensions of the education system—political, institutional, and technical. These dimensions are not independent elements, but rather are interactive factors that both create and respond to change.” Gillies’ emphasis on the interaction between key components of the change process distinguishes it from stage models of policymaking. Among other important contributions to the educational change

processes, Gillies' framework suggests that seven core modalities link the institutional, political, and technical dimensions of the educational change process: information, awareness, action, evaluation, learning, communication, and engagement. These essential policy modalities may also be considered activities to be undertaken to plan and implement policy.

In sum, the conceptual frameworks of education policymaking described here highlight some conflicting but also complementary beliefs about how education policies can be made. First, some models suggest that policymaking occurs in stages or sequentially, while others suggest that the process is more dynamic and interactive. Understanding this debate is useful for planning, in that decisions made about the sequence and order of policymaking activities should be flexible, proactive and reactive to the local context. For example, it may be that activities to support the analysis of the existing situation (the first step in policymaking as established by Haddad in the model above) may not necessarily end when the generation of policy options begin, but may remain ongoing. Second, the models, especially those put forth by Kingdon and Gillies, suggest that education policymaking and change are likely to occur when different dimensions of the policymaking system come together. Kingdon describes those dimensions as problems, policies, and politics, while Gillies describes them as political, institutional, and technical. Understanding that policymaking requires intervention and action across multiple and complementary dimensions within the system is also useful for USAID planning. Finally, Gillies's framework offers an applicable overview of specific policy modalities that are likely to be useful levers of educational change. The next section discusses several key policy modalities that can be used to guide USAID reading strategy work in the LAC region.

DEFINING POLICY MODALITIES

In addition to understanding how policies come to be, it is important to understand the strategies that can be undertaken to carry out the policymaking process. In 2004, USAID funded research that developed a policy framework to analyze components of health policies in the developing world (Hardee et al., 2004). Known as the Policy Circle, this framework focuses on six components that make up policy and specifically highlights three strategies, or policy modalities, associated with the policymaking process. These are:

1. Advocacy for the issue to be addressed through policy (and how to address it);
2. Policy dialogue on what the policy will include; and
3. Data analysis to aid each step of the process.

These policy modalities fit well with the core elements of the educational change process put forth by Gillies. All three incorporate the generation and dissemination of information, communication, awareness, and learning for key stakeholders or participants. Advocacy activities can promote engagement and action regarding the policy issue. Given the importance of these modalities in the policymaking process, this report prioritizes the role of advocacy, policy dialogue, and data analysis in empirically-studied education policies in Latin America, as a tool to inform USAID's future work to promote reading achievement in the region.

TRENDS IN THE USE OF ADVOCACY, DIALOGUE AND DATA ANALYSIS IN LAC EDUCATION POLICYMAKING

As stated in the Policy Circle framework, the three activities associated with policy development are advocacy, policy dialogue, and data analysis. The findings are organized by modalities that impact early grade reading: teachers, school administration and finance, curricula and access. The review uncovered considerable literature describing the most commonly employed policy modalities in these four areas.

TEACHER POLICY

Effective teaching in the classroom is widely considered the single most important tool for improving student achievement in all subject areas, including reading (Hanushek et al., 2005). Converging global agreement around this belief has resulted in “systemic educational reform movements which exert an important influence on teacher education and teachers” (Tatto, 2007). At the same time, teachers’ unions in Latin America are often seen as resistant to implementing new teacher policy (Vegas, 2005). This section describes teacher policy in Chile and Mexico and highlights the ways in which the three policy modalities—advocacy, policy dialogue, and data analysis—were used to plan and implement teacher policy in collaboration with teachers’ unions.

Numerous teacher policies addressing different themes (e.g., recruitment, performance) are currently in place in the region, but some of the most innovative have used teacher bonus systems to reward experience and performance. In the past 25 years, Chile and Mexico have both implemented such policies. Chile and Mexico have national-level programs that connect teacher career advancement, as well as financial incentives and rewards, to teacher accountability. In Chile, performance-based financial incentives to teachers are awarded through two systems: the National Subsidized School Performance Evaluation (SNED in its Spanish acronym), a school-level award, and the Accreditation for Pedagogic Excellence (APE) Award program. Mexico’s national teacher bonus program is similar in structure and purpose to Chile’s APE initiative. Created in 1992, Mexico’s Carrera Magisterial (CM) program targets primary and secondary teachers with at least two to six years of experience. The program offers teachers the opportunity to earn bonuses and promotions through annual evaluations and is part of larger Mexican education reform to modernize education and value teachers’ work (Santibanez, 2002).

The planning and implementation of the Chilean teacher policy, as the box illustrates, occurred largely as a result of advocacy, policy dialogue, and data analysis. Analysis of student achievement data from the national assessment of achievement provided a foundation for policymakers to argue in favor of new teacher policies, since the data suggested that low performance was linked to instruction. The dissemination of those results also served as a form of advocacy, drawing public attention to the issue. Policy dialogue, particularly between governmental actors in the ministries of education and finance, also supported the development and implementation of the new Chilean teacher policy.

Box 2: Teacher Reforms in Chile: A Case of Education Policymaking through Stages

In 1995, the Chilean government passed a Teacher Statute that included, among other components, “establishing a system of bonuses (collective) for the teachers at the better performing schools based on learning results (SNED system)” (Cox, 2006). By 2005, the government had successfully passed the *Sistema de Evaluación del Desempeño Profesional Docente* (Evaluation System of Teacher Professional Performance), a mandatory evaluation of all teachers based on measures of peer-reviewed teaching ability and linked to salary increases (Cox, 2006).

To make such revolutionary accountability policies, Cox argues that Chile followed a stage process of policymaking and implementation. The first key stage (1991–1994) consisted of the government commissioning a set of major research projects, as well as the establishment of a high-level commission to determine educational priorities (Cox, 2006). A second stage involved improving educational infrastructure and resources, followed by a third stage of education reforms to extend the Chilean school day and reform curricula. Participation from multiple stakeholders, including private sector actors, teachers, and government officials, characterized each of these stages (Cox, 2006).

A separate analysis by Crouch (2005) examining how such accountability policies were made possible in Chile suggested the importance of four key factors: (1) strong leadership in the Ministry of Education; (2) high level of interest and technical interactions between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance; (3) high-quality leadership and participation of the teacher union; and (4) a strong tradition of public dissemination of student achievement results.

As in the Chilean case, Mexico's CM was implemented as part of a larger reform package that also addressed the implementation of a new curriculum and teaching pedagogy (Tatto, 2007). The political climate around the creation of a career ladder/incentive system for teachers was also favorable because it was supported by both the Mexican federal government and the teachers' union (Santibanez et al., 2007). At the time, both groups of stakeholders agreed that the CM could be a solution to the movements toward increasing teacher salaries (promoted by the union) and modernizing education (promoted by the federal government). CM appeared to survive as a policy proposal because it fit with the national mood and had little political opposition, conditions set out by Kingdon's garbage can model (2003). The policy dialogue between these two key stakeholder groups was essential to the policy's implementation. In contrast to the Chilean example, it is unclear to what extent advocacy or data analysis affected the successful implementation of CM. In fact, the CM itself seemed to be used as an implementation tool of sorts, to ensure teachers would adopt the new curriculum and pedagogical practices. It was seen as a reward to incentivize teachers' cooperation; the Mexican teachers' union, the National Union of Education Workers/*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (SNTE), was central to the implementation of the CM.

These examples of teacher policy in Chile and Mexico provide important lessons that can inform USAID's work to improve reading achievement in the region. Some of these lessons are:

- The analysis and dissemination of student achievement data are useful for both generating public advocacy to support policy and demand education reform to promote reading for all, and serving as a foundation for policy dialogue. Assessment systems also ensure that evidence will be gathered to show whether reading policies and reforms that have been implemented are resulting in reading improvement among students. Reliable national assessment systems must exist, researchers must receive support to conduct analyses and disseminate their results publicly, and education stakeholders must have access to results and be able to understand and act upon them.
- Because of historically low status, education ministries might benefit from engaging in policy dialogue with members of other ministries, such as finance, that may possess greater influence on the national policy scene. Harnessing such influence may be an effective tool for putting early reading on the national policy agenda as well as ensuring that reading policies and programs are adequately funded.

The first lesson has already been adopted by USAID, international development organizations, and many national ministries of education, as evidenced by the growing number of national and sub-national educational assessment systems, as well as the widespread use of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). The second lesson is perhaps less common in regard to planning for early grade reading improvement, as the explicit focus on reading seems to prioritize engagement with technical specialists in education, rather than, for instance, the finance ministry. This point is especially critical, as successful reading interventions generally rely on public funding. Recognizing the role those outside the field of education may play in influencing the success of reading policy and engaging them in the policymaking process from the outset could help ensure the policy's success.

ADMINISTRATION/FINANCE POLICY

Like the case of teacher policy, the planning and implementation of administration/finance policy in the region has depended heavily on the modalities of advocacy, policy dialogue, and data analysis. This section introduces a fourth policy modality that can be employed as an activity in the policy process, capacity building among a variety of educational stakeholders (e.g., government officials, schools and teachers, and civil society). The cases in this section show how capacity building among key stakeholders can be used to support policy implementation.

Decentralization policies in Latin America are widespread. In Central America, four nations—El Salvador (see box below), Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua—implemented decentralization policies that share a focus on improving rural schools through the establishment of local school management councils, among other components. Through these policies, local actors took on responsibility for a combination of personnel management, pedagogy, maintenance and infrastructure, and budget responsibilities (Di Gropello, 2006), and parents were given a role as voting members in newly created school-level councils charged with school management.

Given the parallels in the focus of these policies, one might also expect similar implementation processes. Notably, however, political commitment, inclusion of key stakeholders, institutional capacity in administration, and technical capacity in administration vary across the countries (di Gropello, 2006).

During a period of relative administrative stability, decentralization policies in Central American countries were considered to have been successfully implemented, due to several factors. The Nicaraguan policy in particular has garnered attention as a significant innovation in the region. The Nicaraguan Autonomous School policy was first implemented as a program in 1993 and put into law in 2002. The policy required participating rural schools to create local school administrative councils and transferred funds to schools to pay teacher salaries and purchase resources (Gershberg et al., 2011). Families were also required to pay school fees for various school-related costs, including supplementary teacher salaries.

The policymaking and implementation processes of the Nicaraguan Autonomous School policy were somewhat unique. Four elements characterized the policy. First, the policy had an influential and strong leader. Minister of Education Humberto Belli had the support of multilateral and bilateral organizations and was reappointed after a change in political administration. Second, the initial selection of schools for participation in the program (prior to it becoming law in 2002) targeted schools that were expected to be successful in implementing the program. Specifically, the program focused on secondary schools with strong administrative leadership and involved parents (Gershberg, 2002). When the program was expanded, schools' participation in the program required a majority vote of teachers, to ensure adequate buy-in. Finally, like the Education with Community Participation/*Educación con Participación de la Comunidad* (EDUCO) program in El Salvador, training of key implementers was central to the successful implementation of the Autonomous Schools policy. In this case, the policy relied on a well-trained group of regional MINED officials to promote the policy, recruit new schools and teachers, and train school and community-level actors (Gershberg et al., 2011).

Research suggests that political commitment to the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan reforms was consistent over time, whereas in Guatemala and Honduras it wavered with political changes. However, since the publication of Di Gropello's research in 2006, both the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan policies were ended by incoming political parties, highlighting the susceptibility of policies to political turnover, even after a period of time with widespread support. These findings echo Kingdon's garbage can model of policymaking, which emphasizes the importance of political support to successful planning and warns of the detrimental effects of administrative turnover, a practice that is vulnerable to the existing term limits and competing economic opportunities of public officials in each country.

The Central American decentralization policies not only decentralized administrative responsibilities to the local levels, but also shifted certain financial responsibilities to schools or parent associations. Implementing a policy that altered the distribution and management of school finances was also characteristic of Brazil during the 1990s. In addition to the already highly decentralized nature of the education system, Brazilian social policy during that period reflected "a conscious effort... to reduce the direct presence of federal administration in carrying out social policies by decentralizing procedures in favor of other federal organizations or of social organizations, or even by public participation in

controlling their effectiveness” (Souza, 2005). In 1998, Brazil passed legislation creating the *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério* (Fund for the

Box 3: EDUCO Reform in El Salvador: A Case of Education Policymaking through Capacity Building

During the Salvadoran civil war in the 1980s, rural schools were largely destroyed or abandoned. To provide education for rural children during that period, rural communities administered and financed their own schools (Jimenez & Sawada, 2003). At the end of the civil war in 1991, the Ministry of Education (MINED) instituted the Education with Community Participation/ *Educación con Participación de la Comunidad* (EDUCO) rural schools initiative to provide basic education for children in grades 1–8 through a decentralized, community-governed process.

EDUCO included the establishment of parent advisory councils to administer schools funds transferred from MINED, as well as hire teachers and purchase school resources (Desmond, 2009). This model was used as a “prototype as the principal method for expanding education in rural areas,” thereby becoming de facto education policy for rural regions of the country (Jimenez & Sawada, 2003). The adoption of EDUCO by the MINED is evidence of strong political commitment, a factor likely to have contributed to its successful implementation.

Two additional factors that probably aided the adoption and implementation of EDUCO by the MINED were state-society linkages and the inclusion of multiple stakeholders into policy dialogue. In her comparative analysis of school-based management initiatives in Central America, Di Gropello (2006) states that EDUCO was characterized by “...national dialogues at the start of the reform and repeated consultations during the implementation period.” Also, some effort was made to include the Salvadoran teachers’ union in the reform, although it is unclear to what extent.

The final factor that characterized the success of EDUCO was widespread capacity building. Reformers used both student information dissemination and inclusion strategies. Local reformers, together with a team from the Harvard Institute for International Development, held a series of meetings and workshops with local actors, civil society organization actors, business leaders, ministerial staff, and others. One of these meetings even involved the presidential candidates. As a result, the opposition parties endorsed the reform (Corrales, 1999). Research on the implementation of EDUCO suggests six key components to its success. These include: 1) identifying participating schools; 2) organizing school councils; 3) training for school councils; 4) contracting and supervision of school council trainers; 5) monitoring of school councils; and 6) training of teachers. Given the importance of the schools, communities, and parents in collaborating to administer and manage the schools, local capacity building through training was the main tool for implementation. A cadre of supervisors and/or trainers was essential to this system, although the EDUCO policy has changed the actors who serve as trainers throughout its period of implementation.

Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Teacher Appreciation, or FUNDEF). FUNDEF was an education finance equalization law that aimed to guarantee a minimum level of spending per student in primary schools.²³ The law was revolutionary since it addressed the long-standing inequalities in education finance between states, in which poor states generated less funding for education than wealthy states (Gordon & Vegas, 2005).

According to the Minister of Education at the time, the key to successfully passing and implementing the FUNDEF law rested on three pillars: information, communication, and evaluation (Souza, 2005). These factors mirror closely the three policy modalities of advocacy, policy dialogue, and data analysis. In 1995, the Brazilian government officially created the National Education Statistics Institute (INEP) and also initiated an annual education census to gather basic information on schools. These activities contributed to the creation and public dissemination of information about the education system. Specifically in relation to the successful implementation of FUNDEF, the census provided municipal mayors with

23. In 2006, the FUNDEF law expired after 10 years of implementation. A similar, but broader, law (FUNDEB) was subsequently passed that extended the equalization of education finance to preschool and secondary education, as well as primary education.

information on the number of children attending municipal primary schools. This was important because FUNDEF funding was tied to student enrollment, meaning that “more children in municipal schools meant a greater share of FUNDEF money for the municipality” (Souza, 2005).

Communication about the FUNDEF law was essential to its implementation, as it opened the door for the public to understand the law and, if necessary, hold officials accountable for the use of the new FUNDEF funds. The government organized a national “Every Child in School” campaign to announce that the new law had been passed. The campaign was multipronged and included television and radio spots, large-scale press events at which the Minister of Education appeared, the use of social merchandising in sporting and cultural events and in television programs, and banners posted in airports. The campaign also included 27 three-day state seminars organized around the “Every Child in School” theme. Seminars were attended by state and municipal officials and members of churches, the press, the business community, unions, and others (Souza, 2005).

Policy dialogue was essential to both the Salvadoran and Brazilian policies. In both cases, policy dialogue was broad, including multiple stakeholders; and ongoing over long periods of time, rather than occurring at a few large meetings. Advocacy was also a crucial component for the Nicaraguan and Brazilian policies. In Nicaragua, government workers at the regional level were used to advocate and promote the Autonomous Schools project to schools and teachers. In Brazil, public campaigns and events were used to advocate for the finance policy and garner public support and awareness. Data analysis and the dissemination of results also played an important role in the Brazilian case, similar to that evident in the Chilean and Mexican teacher policy cases. With concrete, publicly-available data in hand, policymakers and civil society were better able to understand and support education reforms.

Finally, these cases illustrate the role of a fourth modality: capacity building - a tool for policy implementation. In these cases, capacity building activities encouraged the public, parents, and the community to hold schools accountable. In Nicaragua, capacity building among MINED officials at the regional level also ensured quality advocacy efforts, resulting in the recruitment of schools that were likely to be successful. In the case of the administrative policies, systems were put in place to establish school management councils and train their members. In the case of the Brazilian FUNDEF policy, capacity building occurred through the efforts to build public awareness through the targeted multi-state seminars and workshops attended by a wide range of stakeholders. Providing the public with transparent information and with the tools to understand the information opened the possibility for greater civil action and engagement. Thus, finding tools to ensure accountability for a policy’s successful implementation appears to be a useful strategy.

The examples of administration/finance policies in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Brazil provide important lessons that can inform USAID’s work to improve reading achievement in the region. Some of these examples are:

- The various populations to which advocacy efforts may be targeted depend on the nature of the policy itself. In Nicaragua, advocacy efforts were targeted to schools and teachers because the policy’s success depended upon self-selection into the program. In Brazil, advocacy efforts were focused on the public at large, because the policy targeted all schools (not just rural schools, as in the other cases) and depended on the public holding school officials accountable for transparent use of new funds.
- The utility of capacity building among key stakeholders as a policy implementation tool is essential. While policies are being planned, consideration must be given to the capacity of key stakeholders to implement policy. If policies depend on accountability, for example, plans must be made to ensure that actors understand and are able to act in ways to hold others accountable. Providing direct training support is one way to accomplish this task.

The lessons learned from these policymaking examples are important to planning reading policy, specifically in relation to the importance of capacity building. As the title of the 1999 report by the American Federation of Teachers states, “Teaching Reading is Rocket Science.” Understanding the myriad skills that students need to possess to be successful readers, as well as the pedagogical and content knowledge that teachers must possess to teach those students successfully will require a serious investment in capacity building. Capacity building among parents, community members, librarians, and coordinators of early childhood centers will also likely be required to ensure early grade reading improvement. Activities undertaken in the region to promote early grade reading policy should consider the ways that advocacy, policy dialogue and data analysis need to be coordinated to support capacity building among all education stakeholders, both institutional and individual.

CURRICULUM POLICY

Changes in curriculum policy in the LAC region have frequently occurred in response to perceived low performance of specific segments of the population. The curricular reforms examined here were created to address a variety of educational challenges, such as improving achievement of rural children (*Escuela Nueva*, *Nueva Escuela Unitaria*, *Telesecundaria*, and *Educadores*), addressing age-grade disparities (*Acelera Brasil* and *Educadores*), and improving education for the poor (*Fe y Alegría*). Information on the activities undertaken to plan these policies is sparse. Given that none of these policies aimed to reform curricula at the national level, one might infer that the planning stage created less contention than might be the case with a more comprehensive reform. In terms of implementation, policy dialogue and advocacy were key policy modalities put into place, with little evidence that data analysis played a key role. In all cases, the curricular reforms consisted of a multipronged approach that addressed content, pedagogy, and, in some cases, the mode of delivery of instruction.

The curricula for these reforms were mainly student-centered and presented in the classroom through textbooks and/or instructional manuals. For example, the *Escuela Nueva* (New School) reform created its own learning guides for children, aimed at allowing students to drive their own learning (McEwan & Beneveniste, 2001). The curricula were also intended to be flexible and adapted to the local context, particularly in the cases of *Escuela Nueva*, *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* (New United School), and *Fe y Alegría* (Faith and Joy) (Swope & Latorre, 1995). In contrast, *Acelera Brasil* (Brazil) created its own materials that are highly structured so teachers of various levels of experience can successfully deliver the same content across various contexts (Lalli, 2000). The curriculum continues to be student centered, so that student participation is a central element of the curriculum, but its reportedly highly structured nature distinguishes it from *Escuela Nueva*'s approach. Another distinguishing characteristic of the *Acelera Brasil* curriculum is that it included 40 books that have been selected according to the needs of the target population, in line with the expectation that reading occurs on a regular basis (Lalli, 2000).

Another Brazilian program, in the state of Minas Gerais, took a similar approach in using student performance as a basis for developing new pedagogical materials to be used in the classroom, especially in areas identified for improvement. Box 4 provides more information on this program.

In addition to their specific targeting mechanisms, these curricular reforms all engaged in some level of public-, private-, and NGO-sector partnerships for at least one reform during the conceptualization stage. For instance, to develop *Escuela Nueva*, a steering group was created, composed of teachers, supervisors, university professors, and staff members from the national MINED (McEwan & Beneveniste, 2001). Nearly all of the reforms required some level of community support or involvement while also drawing on MINED funding or resources. In the *Escuela Nueva*, *Nueva Escuela Unitaria*, *Telesecundaria*, and *Fe y Alegría* reforms, the local communities were called upon to:

- Adapt the school and work loads to a rural lifestyle (Colbert et al., 1993);
- Ensure a minimum number of students were enrolled in the program;
- Actively participate in school administration and management (Allcot & Ortega, 2006); and

- Act as teachers to implement the new curricula (Kraft, 2009).

For nearly all of these reforms, partnerships between the MINED and local governments and communities appeared to be central to successful implementation of a new curriculum.

Another defining quality of these reforms is their success: most of the reforms have documented empirical evidence of their impact. In most cases, success was measured by impact on student standardized achievement scores. Despite these successful outcomes, empirical evidence also suggests that the outcomes were not positive for some reforms: for example, DeStefano and colleagues (2007) reported that *Educatedos* students completed school at lower rates than their traditional-school counterparts. Thus, research on the beneficial impact of these reforms is not necessarily conclusive.

These examples of curriculum policy reform provide important lessons that can inform USAID’s work to improve reading achievement in the region. One of these lessons stresses the importance of including local communities in dialogue and advocacy efforts when implementing policies in a targeted fashion. Each of the reforms described in this section depended upon the involvement and support of local community actors; successful implementation could not have been achieved without targeted communication with those populations.

This lesson is particularly useful to consider when planning early grade reading policy activities, as it highlights the importance of local participation and flexibility in the content of early grade reading initiatives. While in some countries there is a shift toward greater centralization of curricular objectives, as evidenced by the Common Core Standards in the United States, the diversity and disparities in language, geography, and socioeconomic status in most Latin American countries may require greater consideration of local contexts. Involving local actors in the planning and implementation of early grade reading policies may help to ensure the policy’s success.

ACCESS POLICY

Countries in LAC have made tremendous strides in guaranteeing access to primary school education. The region has largely achieved universal primary school access, although improvements in the rates of access among certain marginalized groups are still needed. This section describes some of the access policies that have been put into place and specifically highlights the strategies used to implement those policies. In each case, advocacy and policy dialogue were keys to success, especially through the

Box 4: Holistic System Approach to Reading Improvement: Minas Gerais, Brazil

Minas Gerais is the third largest state in Brazil. In 2006, a state-wide assessment showed that only 49 percent of eight-year-old students were reading at the recommended level. The governor of the state set the goal of increasing this percentage to 90 percent by 2010, a lofty aim that included 2,500 primary schools, 15,000 teachers, and 500,000 students.

The overall goal for the state was scaled down to reach targets for specific regions and schools. The intervention included a “results book”, which included students’ baseline reading performance and allowed teachers and principals to chart students’ progress. Data analysis was central to the project, which used data collected from the results books to inform the Department of Education on how to best design pedagogical materials for teachers and new workbooks for students. The guides that were developed became so popular that they were adopted by several non-public schools.

The Department of Education also provided support by sending out 50 of its members to schools throughout the state to train teachers, to disseminate and assess the implementation of the support materials, and to gauge progress in the schools. The information collected during visits to the school was tracked in an online database, where the state’s evaluation team could determine which schools needed the most attention and in what ways. To encourage high performance, teachers in schools that met their target received up to one month’s extra salary. By 2010, this systemic approach increased the percentage of eight-year-olds reading at the recommended level from 49 percent to 86 percent.

Source: Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010.

establishment of a high-level working group or institution that could carry out the work to ensure access to the marginalized population.

Eduque a la Niña (Educate the Girl) aimed to increase basic education enrollment among girls in Guatemala. The program was initially run through a local NGO called *Asociación Guatemalteca de Educación Sexual* or AGES, with support from USAID. Later, the Guatemalan MINED adopted and expanded the program with help from the national coffee growers' association (*Fundación para el Desarrollo Rural* or FUNRURAL). The program offered small scholarships to families to send girls to school and also promoted girls' education to sensitize parents and community members to the importance of educating girls (Rugh & Brush, 2002).

Advocacy efforts to promote awareness of the importance of girls' education were a core component of the policy process for *Eduque a la Niña*. Schools, teachers, parents, and the public and private sectors were all targets of the advocacy efforts. First, the program created a packet of teachers' guides and other gender-sensitive materials to promote girls' education and distributed the packets to schools and teachers. Second, a major public awareness campaign was launched focused on key geographical regions to promote girls' education to parents via posters and radio spots. The project also implemented its information dissemination strategy in communities by holding workshops in local areas identified as having a high need to incorporate girls in education. These workshops included the use of games, stories, radio programs, and posters. In addition, the reform worked to garner high-level support and involvement around girls' education by organizing the Third Girls' Education Forum, the Second National Seminar on Girls' Education, and the Network of Information and Coordination on Girls' Education. The impacts of the program were positive. Follow-up data showed that just two percent of girls with scholarships did not return to second grade in 1996, compared with 11 percent for girls without scholarships (Rugh & Brush, 2002; Provasnik et al., 2002).

Advocacy was also a key policy modality used in the New Horizons for Girls' Education Project of the Girls' Education Activity (GEA) project in Peru. It was established in April 1998 to promote girls' completion of primary school, particularly in rural areas and among indigenous populations. The project was implemented at the national, regional, and local levels through multilayered advocacy efforts. Through GEA, a national girls' education network (*Florecer*) was established. This network was fundamental to expanding and sustaining the educational reform activities. The project engaged in community networking and dissemination and in developing pilot projects in districts with high poverty, large gender gaps, and large populations of non-native speakers of Spanish. Advocacy efforts targeted populations in rural areas; messages promoting girls' education were put forth via radio and television. At the same time, the national-level network worked to enact a law promoting girls' education (Rugh & Brush, 2002).

Like the education policies targeting girls, policymakers aimed at implementing a new indigenous education policy in Peru employed the modalities of advocacy and policy dialogue. Perhaps most importantly, however, successful implementation depended first on the creation of a governmental body dedicated to intercultural and bilingual education. In 2003, the government of Peru passed the General Education Law 28044. Article 19 of this law guarantees access to intercultural bilingual education for indigenous students, specifically by "establishing special programs" that meet their unique needs, such as textbooks in the mother tongue and instruction in Spanish as a second language. A key step in the implementation of the intercultural bilingual education policy was restructuring an existing bilingual education institute as the National Division of Intercultural Bilingual Education (DINEBI). DINEBI moved from being a unit within the MINED to becoming an independent entity, which gave it "more autonomy over policy decisions and thus in a position to have greater impact on legislation affecting bilingual education and language policy" (Garcia, 2004).

After its reconstitution, DINEBI engaged in policy dialogue and advocacy efforts to implement and expand the intercultural bilingual education policy (Garcia (2004). It established a 15-member National Consulting Committee on Intercultural Bilingual Education, including nine positions for indigenous professionals; held several national-level meetings to consult with intellectuals, NGO workers, teacher-trainers, and bilingual teachers; drafted a report on the national politics of languages and cultures in education; and developed a timeline (Strategic Plan, 2001–2005) for the future development of bilingual intercultural education in Peru.

Garcia (2004) also attributed the institutionalization of intercultural bilingual education, in part, to the presence and financial support of international actors, including donor organizations such as the World Bank. She explains that the role of such organizations helped solidify institutionalization despite “skepticism about government commitment to these cultural policies.”

The three policies to promote access described in this section clearly illustrate the interactive nature of policymaking and educational change, as suggested by Kingdon (2003) and Gillies et al. (2010). The tools used to make and implement these policies were multipronged and did not occur in a sequential or stage process; rather, generating policy options, evaluating policy options, and planning for implementation occurred in a loop, moving between policymaking and implementation. In addition, the actors involved in both policymaking and implementation included government officials, scholars, teachers, parents, and other key stakeholders in the educational policy process.

These examples provide important lessons that can inform USAID’s work to improve reading achievement in the region. One of these lessons is that public advocacy efforts are essential to making and implementing policies that challenge cultural traditions. In these examples, the expansion of education among girls and indigenous populations confronted widely held beliefs. Multipronged and multi-targeted advocacy efforts seemed most useful in supporting implementation in that environment.

The lesson that public advocacy efforts can help shape policies that successfully challenge cultural traditions, which seem to be a barrier to educational improvement, is relevant to early grade reading policymaking. As Kingdon’s model of policymaking highlighted, policymaking occurs when there is agreement on the nature of a specific policy problem. While multiple constituencies may agree that reading achievement is inadequate, opinions on the specific sources of that low reading achievement (e.g., lack of individual student motivation or capability, lack of familial support, poor instructional practices) may be rooted in cultural or ideological understandings that are difficult to change. Advocacy efforts are essential in shaping public opinion and guaranteeing buy-in to recommended education reforms.

CONCLUSIONS

Guided by the models of education policymaking outlined in the conceptual framework, this section has examined the various policy modalities employed to foment policy change in LAC. The findings from this review suggest that:

- **Advocacy, policy dialogue, data analysis, and capacity building are the most used modalities in the region.** Education policies are most commonly made and implemented using the modalities of advocacy, policy dialogue, data analysis, and capacity building, which is in line with other USAID research on the policymaking process (Hardee et al., 2004). In fact, most policies described herein employed a combination of advocacy and policy dialogue efforts in their multiple forms: marketing campaigns; the creation of high-level, interdisciplinary commissions; and grassroots organizing.
- **To a lesser extent, data analysis was used as a modality to support policy planning and implementation.** Most commonly, the analysis and dissemination of student achievement results were used to draw public attention to the policy problem. Data analysis was also used to motivate

municipal education officials, as in the case of finance reform in Brazil. How or whether data analysis was used to inform policy dialogue was less evident; this is not surprising, given the research that suggests that the policy planning process is tenuously linked to research evidence (Reimers & McGinn, 1997). That data analysis was not clearly reported as a policy modality used in several cases is also unsurprising, given the time and capacity necessary to collect, analyze, and disseminate data.

- ***The lack of evaluation both of the impact of policy modalities on policy-making, as well as the impact of the resulting policies on education in the region, hinders the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses of policy modalities.*** In all, the examples of education policymaking processes described in this section provide a foundation for USAID early grade reading strategy activities in LAC. However, the lack of clear empirical data evaluating the impact of either the policy modalities or of the education policies described here means that the review cannot clearly delineate the strengths and weaknesses of specific policy modalities.

The Kingdon policymaking model and Gilles's model of educational change illustrate the interactive, complex and localized nature of education policymaking. At the same time, the policymaking trends described herein offer a 'menu' of possible policy modalities that USAID may employ in collaboration with national ministries and other partners to improve early grade reading achievement (see Table 10), allowing the Agency flexibility to operate within different country contexts.

Table 10: Key Modalities Employed in Education Policy Change in LAC

Advocacy	Dialogue	Data Analysis	Capacity Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing campaigns ▪ Grassroots organizing ▪ Public dissemination of student achievement results ▪ Policy champion ▪ Media and social merchandising ▪ Creation of permanent national-level research or advocacy institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-level interdisciplinary commissions or working groups ▪ Participation from multiple public stakeholders, including those in other ministries (e.g. Finance) ▪ Public-private partnerships ▪ Inclusion and collaboration with teachers' union ▪ Parent advisory council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large-scale assessments ▪ Local Report Cards ▪ Commissioning and supporting academic research on key topics ▪ Creation of national education research/statistics body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training local education officials ▪ Training parents and community members ▪ Creation of career ladders/professional advancement systems to support implementation of educational change ▪ Decentralization of school management responsibilities ▪ Creation and widespread dissemination of guides, resources, and materials

Source: Author.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX I: METHODOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT DESIGN

DATA COLLECTION

The team employed a mixed methods research approach, which relied heavily on qualitative analysis. The assessment team used a purposeful sample - nonrandom sampling - where selection was made to meet the purposes of the assessment. The sample composition included “decision makers” and “opinion leaders” in the target countries, which include officials from the executive and legislative branches of government, civil society leaders, teachers unions, school leaders, donors, and the private sector.

There were five main data collection methods:

1. Review of documentation and previous PREAL evaluation

The assessment team conducted a comprehensive review of the two previous PREAL program evaluations from 2001 and 2006. Additionally, they analyzed several other PREAL documents, including success stories, PREAL publications (i.e. international examination summaries, working papers, country report cards, etc.), and a number of other program-related documents.

2. In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) during field work in Honduras, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic

As the primary stakeholders for this assessment consisted of a diverse body of public and private sector policy makers, and partners in the private sector, the primary method of data collection consisted of qualitative instruments administered one-on-one with key informants from Guatemala, Honduras, and Dominican Republic. These included one-on-one interviews in person. The table below provides a break-down of interviewees by country and sector.

Table 11: Persons Interviewed

	Public sector	Donors	Business	Civil Society	Total
Honduras	17	12	1	4	34
Guatemala	5	8	3	14	30
Dominican Republic	13	3	2	18	36
TOTAL	35	23	6	36	100

The list of interviewees included those named by PREAL, USAID/LAC office, and others that have local recognition and prestige in each country. The assessment included relevant stakeholders in each location, assuring reliability from the beginning of the research through the final report.

In order to confirm the qualitative²⁴ field work the Team employed different strategies. Key themes that emerged in the course of the interviews were followed up on in subsequent interviews. The diverse and yet complementary composition of the Team was an essential factor; having a local consultant from each visited country and access to local printed and website materials to supplement the data provided in advance also helped to triangulate the findings.

3. Online survey

24. The Team followed common standards for qualitative research; one useful source is: Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A. M. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis. An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

In order to incorporate a wider range of participants in this assessment, the online survey was distributed to PREAL beneficiaries both in the countries visited as well as in others that were not. USAID/LAC provided the contacts who were then invited to participate in the survey. The table below depicts the distribution of participants by country.

Table 12: Online Survey Participants, by country

Country	# of participants	%
Guatemala	27	47.37
Honduras	10	17.54
El Salvador	12	21.05
Dominican Republic	7	12.28
Costa Rica	1	1.75
Total	57²⁵	100%

The survey was comprised of 25 questions, which collected participants' demographic information, as well as their opinions and experiences concerning various aspects of PREAL, education policy, and policy implementation in their countries. There were three question formats: Likert scale, polar (i.e. yes-no), and open-ended. The responses to the Likert scale and polar questions were used to generate quantitative results, while the open-ended questions were analyzed using Atlas.ti.

4. Education Policymaking Review

The team also developed a review of education policymaking in the region that addresses the second evaluation question concerning reading-focused policy. The review identifies and describes different modalities of education policy work. It also provides examples of each modality.

METHODOLOGY

The review is derived from an analysis of literature on education policy and reform in Latin America and the Caribbean. Literature was identified through a search of electronic databases of education literature including, ERIC, Google Scholar and DEC. The search terms that were employed included “education policy”, “education reform”, “educational change”, and “education policy implementation”. The search was limited to the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Initially, the search was limited to literature published since 2002 (10 years); however, as literature was identified, older, relevant studies were included. Titles and abstracts were reviewed to ensure the documents retrieved were suitable for the report, based on their focus on education policy, reform, and/or implementation. Also, educational experts advising the larger project under which this review was developed offered suggestions to key literature; thus, these studies were also included in the development of the review.

In all, 48 documents (e.g. research reports, book chapters, project evaluations, scholarly journal articles) were used as the basis for this report. After a preliminary round of data analysis, two brief, informal interviews with key researchers in education policy and reform in the region were conducted to help enhance and focus the ongoing analysis. The subjects of these interviews were Luis Crouch, Head of the

25. Qualtrics, the software used to conduct the online survey, indicates 60 completed surveys. There is a difference between this number and the total amount of responses/participants per question, as evident in the gender disaggregated demographic information. This is due to the fact that some participants did not answer a given question.

Global Good Practice Team at the Global Partnership for Education and John Gillies, Senior Vice President & Director Global Learning Group at FHI360.

Once the appropriate body of literature was identified, a qualitative, inductive approach to identifying and categorizing the different activities for policymaking and implementation was used. The inductive approach to data analysis (also sometimes referred to as grounded theory) examines the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evidence in the analyzed texts to develop a model or theory (Maxwell, 1996). The inductive approach is appropriate for the development of this report first because it is a qualitative study, relying on documents as the main source of data. Second, research on the specific activities used to make and implement policy is relatively sparse; this is especially true in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, an inductive approach was determined most useful in developing the model for this report.

5. Peer Review Panel (PRP)

A Peer Review Panel was convened to provide technical insight and support to the underlying strategy and specific methods used in the PREAL evaluation. The purpose of this panel is to review and provide guidance on the process of evaluation (such as providing feedback on the methodology, instruments, data analysis, and on the interpretation of results) and provide quality control of the draft report. The panel was composed of experts in policy and education reform.

DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the evaluation questions, the qualitative data analysis was developed through:

- *Inductive and Deductive Analysis.* The team used inductive analysis which involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in the data. Specifically the team: (a) developed categories (using recurrent themes) that are large enough to capture a range of views; (b) developed a coding scheme; (c) used Atlas.ti software to analyze the data (the use of software was also intended to minimize risk of bias, a frequent challenge in working with qualitative data). After categories, patterns, and themes were established, the team conducted a deductive analysis that involved testing and affirming the authenticity and appropriateness of the inductive analysis.
- *Triangulation.* The team will use triangulation of methods, sources, and evaluators in order to ensure validity of analysis and interpretation.

ANNEX 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS

Evaluation Question One: Lessons learned from PREAL: What results can be demonstrated from the policy reform focused modalities and activities since 2006, which were meant to address the key 2006 recommendation of moving from “theory” to “practice?”

The focus in addressing this question should be on learning from PREAL’s experimentation with new modalities since 2006. The evaluation should focus on the newer components of activities – particularly those designed to have direct and or demonstrable impacts on education policy formulation or outcomes. The focus under this question should be two new activities: the five “Strategic partnerships” (2008 – 2011) and Phase II of PREAL’s Business-Education Alliance program. Consideration should also be given to other activities that aim to directly influence policy outcomes, including less formalized ones such as meetings and networks.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Strategic Partnerships Program was designed to influence education policy

Effectiveness:

- What have been the principal achievements of the Strategic Partnerships program?
- To what extent have Strategic Partnerships activities influenced educational policies and/or action? (Provide concrete examples).
- To what extent has the program led to increases in the number and breadth of stakeholders in promoting and assisting improved educational outcomes? (Provide concrete examples).

Target Group Satisfaction:

- To what extent do the program’s beneficiaries (partners, stakeholders, and education officials) recognize the presence and importance of the program?

Effectiveness of the program’s governance and management:

- To what extent PREAL’s program has better prepared partners to support education reform?
- How has PREAL contributed to the capacity of their counterparts in the Strategic Partnership program and vice-versa?
- To what extent have PREAL Strategic Partnership activities influenced other activities in partner organizations?
- What success has PREAL had in promoting and exchanging best practices among the five strategic partners and generally among members of its other programs and networks? How helpful have these exchanges been in promoting educational change?

Sustainability:

- What has been done to ensure sustainability of Strategic Partnership activities in the long-term?
- Has sufficient capacity been built such that technical interventions can be adequately sustained and/or replicated? If yes, please provide concrete examples?

Lessons learned and recommendations:

- What challenges has PREAL faced and overcome to implement the Partnership Program successfully?
- What are the most important lessons learned from the Strategic Partnership Program? (e.g., the need for effective national and regional participation, management and coordination, the importance of capacity development, creating new modalities to achieve increased participation of stakeholders leading to positive impacts on educational policies and outcomes.)
- What recommendations can you make that would make the PREAL program stronger and more effective?

BUSINESS-EDUCATION ALLIANCE PROGRAM

Business-Education Alliance engages with business leaders at the national and regional level to mobilize private sector support for education reform.

Effectiveness:

- To what extent has the Business-Education Alliance Program influenced educational policies and action? (Provide concrete examples).
- To what extent has PREAL and/or its strategic partners helped existing business groups become more effective and authoritative actors in promoting improved education policies and outcomes?
- What are some of the key contributions of the Business-Education Alliance Program to improving education quality in your country?
- To what extent PREAL has successfully expanded the Business-Education Alliance' network to other countries?
- To what extent have particular kinds of business involved in the program increased support to education programs related to their own business (manufacturing, service, agriculture, etc.)?
- How successful has PREAL and/or its strategic partners been in helping business leaders place education on the agenda of the Corporate Social Responsibility movement in Latin America?

Sustainability:

- What has and is being done to ensure that Business-Education Alliance activities will be sustained over the long term?
- How would you describe the network strength of the Education-Business Alliance program? Strong, average or weak. Why?

Target Group Satisfaction:

- To what extent do the program's beneficiaries (government authorities, schools, teachers, families) recognizes and appreciate the presence and importance of the program?

Effectiveness of the program's governance and management:

- To what extent has the Strategic Partnership or other PREAL programs supported the education business alliance and vice-versa? What are some examples of successful collaboration and impact?
- Does PREAL effectively promote collaboration among Business Education networks at regional level? If yes, has it led to demonstrable changes in education policy? What changes?

Lessons learned and recommendations:

- What challenges has PREAL faced and overcome to implement the Business-Education Alliance Program successfully?
- Drawing on the most successful cases of private sector involvement, what are the most important lessons that have been learned as to how to mobilize the private sector to have a positive impact on improving educational quality?
- What recommendations do you have to make the PREAL Business-Education Alliance program stronger and more effective?

ANNEX 3: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES BY COUNTRY**HONDURAS**

Reina Aguilar	AECID, Responsable Sectorial
Samuel Chavarria	Alcalde de Orocuina, Departamento de Choluteca
Juan Carlos Zuniga	Gerente de Proyectos, Alcaldía de Puerto Cortes, Departamento de Cortes
Luis Castillo	AMHON, Gerente de Proyectos
Carlos Olivares	BID, Especialista de Educación
Adolfo Pacheco	CARE, Sub-Director
Juval Valerio	CCIT, Miembro Junta Directiva
Norma Suazo de Sierra	Child Fund, Directora Ejecutiva. Coordinadora de COMCORDE
Daysi Kocchiu	Child Fund, Asistente Dirección Nacional
Lea Cruz	UPNFM, Directora Instituto de Cooperación y Desarrollo
Dennis Cáceres	DIGICE, Director
Josefina Gamero	FEREMA, Directora Técnica
Brenda Lagos	INICE, Directora Ejecutiva
Russbel Hernández	MIDE II, Sub-Director
Edwin Moya	MIDE/AIR, Director
Patricia Rivera	Programa EDUCATRACHOS Unidad Coordinadora de Proyectos UCP-BID.SE
Temby Mary Caprio	Programa PROEFA/GIZ, Directora
Karla Raudales	Secretaría del Despacho de la Presidencia
Orlando Betancourth	UPEG, Director. SE
Edgardo Paredes	Director Distrital de Educación de San José de Colinas, Departamento de Santa Bárbara. SE
Renan Rápalo	Asesor, Secretaria de la Presidencia
Napoleón Morazán	Asesor, Secretaria de la Presidencia
Carlos Hernández	Transformemos Honduras
Carlos Ávila	Rector, UJCV
Ramón Salgado	Director de Educación Superior, UNAH
Armando Euceda	Catedrático, UNAH
Marlon Breve	Vice-Rector Académico ,
Ned Van Steenwyk	Consultor, USAID
Mireya Batres	USAID/HONDURAS Deputy Director Education Office
Benito Martínez	Asistente de Capacitación, UPNFM

Jeff Landsdale	Consultor independiente Reforma Educativa
Elia del Cid	Vice-Ministra, SE
Esmilda Montoya	Directora Educación Básica, SE
Juan Diego Alonso	Economista de Educación, WB

GUATEMALA

Véronica Spross de Rivera	Executive Director Empresarios por la Educación
Hilda de Mazariegos	Dean of the Faculty of Humanities-URL
Hosy Orozco	Faculty of Humanities-URL
Jorge Lavarreda	Director CIEN
Floridalma Meza	Ex-Vice-minister of Education, Ex-Director, ASIES
Dina Fernández	Journalist
Olga Lucrecia Molina	Fundación UNO
Irene de Alfaro	Fundación UNO
Fernando Rubio	USAID/Reforma Educativa en el aula
Gabriela Nuñez	USAID/Reforma Educativa en el aula
Amarylis Franco	USAID/Reforma Educativa en el aula
Luis Enrique López	Director of Programs GIZ
Miguel Angel Franco	Ex-Vice-Minister of Education
Yetilú de Baessa	Dean of the Faculty of Psychology-UFM
Maria del Carmen Aceña	Ex-Minister of Education
Roberto Moreno	Chancellor UVG
Lucía Herrera	President Fundación Pantaleón
Marcela Gajardo	PREAL/CINDE
Ma. Ester Ortega	ASIES
Luisa Mueller	General Director of DIGEDUCA, MinEduc
Iliana Cofiño	Education specialist UNICEF
Aimeé Rodríguez	Coordinator of Education Studies FLACSO Guatemala
Diana Canella	President Empresarios por la Educación
Salvador Paiz	President of FUNSEPA

Egil Galindo	Ministry of Education
Linda Asturias de Barrios	PNUD
María Eugenia Ramírez	Ex-vice-Minister of Education
Celso Chaclán	Leading expert on Bi-lingual and Intercultural Educ.
Armando Godínez	Education Sector Specialist IDB
Agustine de la Varga	Education Sector Specialist Spanish Aid Program

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Maria Teresa Cabrera	Asociación Dominicana De Profesores
Aida Consuelo Hernandez	Empresarios por la Educación
Liliana Gegirogis	Empresarios por la Educación
Guadalupe Valdez San Pedro	Diputada nacional / Ex-Viceministro de Educación
Raddames Mejia	Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra/ Centro de Investigación de Educación y Desarrollo Humano
Leandra Tapia	Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo
Sandra Gonzalez	Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo
Maria Amalia Leon de Jorge	Comunidad educativa. Luxmundi
Jackeline Malagon	Asesora independiente
Rafael Toribio	Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo
Juan Tomas Tavares	Marítima Santo Domingo /Ex-Presidente de EDUCA
Dr. Cesar Cuello Nieto	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
Magda Pepen Peguero	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
Kevin Roberts	USAID
Fernando Ogando	Ministerio de Educación / Ofic. Cooperacion Internacional
Julio Leonardo Valeiron	Instituto dominicano de evaluacion e investigacion de la calidad educativa
Ancell Schekel	Ministerio de Educación
Pascual Victoriano	Ministerio de Educación
Gineida Castillo	INAFOCAM
Carmen Sanchez Ramos	Ministerio de Educación

Clara Baez	Ministerio de Educación
Adalberto Martinez	Ministerio de Educación
Onelda Gomez	Ministerio de Educación
Mercedes Rodriguez	Ministerio de Educación
Ernesto Diaz	Plan Internacional, Dominican Republic
Larissa Pelettier	Plan Internacional, Dominican Republic
Argentina Polonia Henrriquez	Regional # 10, Ministerio de Educación
Arelis Rodriguez	Fundacion Falcombrige Dominicana
Juan Francisco Zapata Peralta	PUCMMA/ Santiago
Amarilis Perez de Zapata	PUCMMA/ Santiago
Ana Margarita Hache de Yunen	PUCMMA/ Santiago
Liliana Montenegro	PUCMMA/ Santiago
Rafael Emilio Yunen	Centro Cultural Eduardo León Jiménez
Rita Mena	PNUD
Salvador Muñoz	AECID
Carmen Evarista Matias	Universidad Autónoma De Santo Domingo, Decanato de Educación