

Evaluation of the Alfalit Adult Literacy Program in Bolivia



BEPS

Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity

CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL

in collaboration with

CARE, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, AND GROUNDWORK



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MAP OF BOLIVIA



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family to study, and actively participate in their communities. It is noteworthy that the school attendance of literacy students' children is also improving.

- The start-up phase of any new project is always a navigation of expected and unexpected challenges, particularly for organizations facing USAID policies and regulations for the first time. Alfalit has successfully managed most of these hurdles and is achieving – or surpassing – most project objectives.
- Implementing a USAID project has required Alfalit Bolivia's transformation from a small, faith-based organization to a more modern NGO partner. This evolution entails organizational development and capacity building with the support of Alfalit International.
- The explosion of demand for Alfalit courses in the past year exemplifies the adage that "Success Breeds Success." Based on interview results, there is currently an unmet demand for at least 200 additional literacy centers around Bolivia.

3. Principal Recommendations

- Rather than trying to fulfill all unmet demand, Alfalit should stop its expansion efforts in the immediate term to consolidate the quality of service delivery in its existing literacy centers.
- While students have innumerable needs, Alfalit should build on its comparative advantage and continue to focus primarily on its central mission of nonformal adult literacy/basic education.
- While basic education was not budgeted for under the first phase of the USAID agreement, it should be included in the follow-on so that students can complete at least 8th grade.
- Alfalit should build on its current efforts to form partnerships and strategic alliances with NGOs, municipalities and other groups — seeking complementary services (e.g., technical training, early childhood care, health care) to the greatest extent possible.
- Alfalit has a long history as an interdenominational faith-based organization in Bolivia. Efforts should be made to continue working with traditional partners so that Alfalit is not totally dependent on USAID funding, improving its prospects for future sustainability.
- The capacity of Alfalit Bolivia should be strengthened through better planning, office systems and administrative/financial policies and procedures.
- Emphasis should be given to the training of all organizational actors, starting with facilitators (teachers). It is also necessary to hire additional promoters to ensure effective supervision.
- If funds are available, additional teaching resources (e.g., small blackboards, basic didactic posters) should be provided to centers, as well as additional reading materials for home libraries to promote a culture of reading and to sustain literacy.
- Although Alfalit should not develop an expertise in vocational education, it is important to provide some work-related information and technical training to students. This can be done by drawing on the expertise of various individuals and groups in local communities.

As this evaluation clearly identified demonstrated results in student learning and behavior change in a short period of time, we believe additional funding – preferably approved on a multi-year basis to permit better planning – would be a sound USAID investment.

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

Alfalit/I	Alfalit International
Alfalit/B	Alfalit Bolivia or Alfalit Boliviano
BEPS	Basic Education and Policy Support Activity
ED	Executive Director
EGAT	Office of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/W	United States Agency for International Development/ Washington
USG	United States Government

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A. Participant Story

The Price of Not Knowing How to Read

María, a 23 year-old mother, whose humble condition prevented her from going to school, tells us her story.

My name is María Rosenda Rollano Cayo, I live in the Pampa Ingenio zone in Villa Colón (highlands of Potosí, Bolivia). I am the mother of two girls and I wash clothing for a living. The remainder of my time I spend doing housework. I come from a large family; I am one of eight children. My mother died a long time ago and my father lives in the countryside.

Two years ago I decided to live with my friend Sebastián Flores, who is currently in jail for having been accused of not paying alimony to his former wife. She says that my friend is the father of her daughter, which has not been proven. They put his fingerprints on a document recognizing him as the father. He put his fingerprints because he does not know how to read or write. For this reason he was put in jail and in two months expects to complete his sentence. This was my principal motivation to decide to enroll in Alfalit.

I found out about Alfalit through a relative who told me what it was like to attend a center called “Toward the Light.” Without thinking twice, I signed up at that center. Knowing that Alfalit also worked with inmates, I looked for the opportunity that would allow my friend to learn how to read and write. Currently, Sebastián takes classes with others from the jail (videos and photographs of these people exist). Meanwhile, I continue attending classes at the center with twenty other women taught by a facilitator, Ms. Fátima.

This group of attendees is made up of only women, some of whom work on the PLANE (National Employment Plan). The women attend fearfully because some of the husbands treat them poorly or do not let them come. Because of this difficulty, many women come to pick up their homework and generally there are no more than fifteen of us at the center.

All of the women come with their children; some bring five or six. I go with my two girls: Lady (six months old) and Jenny (two years old). It is difficult to concentrate on the class with the children along, but the women make every effort. Due to poverty, the children come poorly dressed, as do the mothers. I am one of them, but we all believe that with study and care, our situation can change. We have confidence that with Alfalit, the future will bring us hope to better our lives.

When we go to class, the facilitator motivates us to help us share our experiences. This gives us strength to continue learning to read, write and perform calculations. My aunt, the one who brought me to Alfalit, whom I can assure you did not know how to read or write, now can. I admire her and ever since we continue helping each other.

My hope is that things improve in the future; life is not easy for me. Currently, my two girls have a cough and I have to provide them with everything. For this reason, I ask that you continue to help us with more reading and writing materials and with projects like childcare facilities for our small children.

Narrated on behalf of the Bolivian Alfalit participant.

Potosí, June 2, 2003.

B. Context

On March 1, 2002, USAID awarded a cooperative agreement to Alfalit International (Alfalit/I) to implement adult literacy activities in Bolivia and Angola for an 18-month period, to August 31, 2003. This is the first USAID project ever implemented by Alfalit. \$1.5 million was awarded, with Alfalit/I responsible for \$362,000 in cost-sharing between both countries. \$698,273 was allocated for Alfalit/I's program in Bolivia², and \$801,727 for Angola³. Congress has already approved \$1.5 million of follow-on USAID funding, which will be used to extend Alfalit's existing cooperative agreement from September 1, 2003 to December 31, 2004.

C. Evaluation Purpose

As this evaluation was carried out near the end of the first phase of Alfalit funding, it is essentially a mid-term examination of how the project is progressing in Bolivia and how it can be improved under the second phase of the USAID cooperative agreement.

The three principal evaluation questions⁴ were:

- Are literacy students learning?
- As a result of the literacy classes, are students exhibiting changes in their behavior and role in the community?
- Is Alfalit delivering services effectively? How can the organization be strengthened?

D. Evaluation Methodology, Scope and Approach

The Alfalit evaluation was carried out in three phases. The evaluation design, logistical planning and initial data collection took place in Miami from May 19-22, while fieldwork and initial data analysis occurred in Bolivia from May 23 to June 11. The analysis was completed and the report written in Honduras from June 12-20. A detailed evaluation schedule may be found in Annex 1.

A team of two consultants performed the research and fieldwork, and produced the evaluation report. Danielle Roziewski, team leader for the activity, worked with Enrique Tasiguano. The work was coordinated and supervised by Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII) through its Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity. The Director of BEPS is Donald Graybill. At the time of the evaluation, LAC Activity Coordinator was Antonieta Harwood. The USAID Cognizant Technical Officer for Alfalit in EGAT/Education Office is James Hoxeng.

² The budget for the local affiliate -- Alfalit Bolivia -- is \$550,483.

³ A formative evaluation of the Angolan program will be conducted later this calendar year.

⁴ It is important to note that the following areas are not within the scope of this evaluation, and thus are only touched upon tangentially: (1) Project Materials. Alfalit contracted a Literacy Consultant and Program Evaluation Officer to perform an internal project evaluation in April 2003. One of the goals of that evaluation was to review materials (in all languages) and assess them for pedagogical consistency and relevance of content to learners' situation; (2) the Laubach Literacy Methodology; and (3) Financial and Program Records. The Miami firm of Goldstein, Schecter, Price, Lucas, Horwitz & Co. is undertaking a certified public audit of all of Alfalit/I for the year ending December 31, 2002. The audit will be performed according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Government Auditing Standards (GAS).

USAID stressed a collaborative, participatory approach to the evaluation from the very beginning, and suggested that it be done in the spirit of a broad “stakeholder consultation.” As a result, almost all Alfalit Executive Committee and staff members were involved in the overall evaluation design and planning, the development of group interview guides, the implementation of individual and group interviews around the country, data collection, and the analysis of results/findings.

In an effort to include a broad and representative sample of stakeholders, the evaluators visited Alfalit sites in six of seven active departments (of a total nine). Every effort was made to set up interviews with five key groups in each community in order to obtain a holistic perspective of Alfalit activities. As shown in the table below, 675 people in 60 groups were interviewed using standardized interview guides (see Annex 2).

Table 1. Summary of Group Interviews Held

Type of Group	No. of Groups	Total Participants
Current Literacy Students	17	274
Literacy Graduates	7	77
Facilitators	18	215
Community Leaders	13	53
Family Members of Students	5	56
TOTAL	60	675

In addition to these groups, 44 individual semi-structured interviews were held with Alfalit board members and staff, supervisors, promoters, Ministry of Education officials, mayors, community leaders, etc. A complete list of those interviewed may be found at Annex 3.

E. Adult Education in Bolivia⁵

The Ministry of Education (MOE) “National Literacy Plan for Life and Production 1998-2002” presents the government’s current strategy in this area. The approach is based on training for life and production, citizen participation and cultural diversity. The plan conceives of literacy as the start of a continuous educational process offered in Adult Primary Education. The provision of literacy services is decentralized to municipalities (in accordance with the Law of Popular Participation) and depends primarily on NGOs for implementation. **Based on many years of successful collaboration, the MOE regards Alfalit Bolivia as one of its key adult literacy partners.** This is especially important since the MOE’s budget for alternative and adult education is very limited, with most funds dedicated to the formal primary and secondary school systems.

The MOE is currently in transition to develop a new approach for alternative education under national “curricular transformation” reforms. A new Strategic Plan (through 2006) should be finalized shortly and will define the roles of the MOE: to set standards, experiment/innovate, validate, document, evaluate, systematize and train human resources for alternative education. One of the key goals will be to end absolute illiteracy by 2006. An overarching theme will be “education for production and work” so that citizens are better prepared and equipped to

⁵ A more detailed overview of the Bolivian education sector may be found at Annex 4.

participate in the economy and society. While NGOs will have latitude to design programs and deliver services, they must all operate within these overarching MOE parameters.

II. PROGRAM APPROACH/STRATEGY

Alfalit is a world literacy movement committed to eradicating human suffering by teaching illiterate people to read and write. The overall approach aims to provide basic education as a means to helping people reach their potential. The program helps participants become self-sufficient citizens who can participate in the development of their communities and countries, through its global headquarters in Miami and 21 affiliates around the world.

A. Alfalit International

Alfalit/I was founded in 1961 as a faith-based, educational, nonprofit organization that promotes literacy, elementary education, health, nutrition and community development. The organization's mission is to eradicate human suffering by equipping people to read and write, enabling them to become citizens who contribute to the realization of their own potential, as well as their communities and countries. Serving more than 85,000 students per year, Alfalit/I has trained millions of students by establishing affiliate organizations in 21 countries on four continents around the world.

For most of its history, Alfalit was a volunteer organization supported by individual contributors and church organizations based on the principle "Each One, Teach One." In recent years, Alfalit has expanded its potential to reach more students around the world through systematizing both its operations and educational materials/training.

Alfalit's literacy program – internationally recognized by UNESCO – is based on the Laubach method of teaching. This methodology uses simple words and pictures to progress from the spoken to written word in easy steps. Students are taught to associate easily recognized pictures with simple words, which are divided into syllables. Picture flashcards allow students to combine syllables to form words. Repetitive reading of these combinations in sentences ensures retention and develops the skill of decoding words. Writing and reading comprehension are also emphasized. Alfalit can teach illiterates in most countries to read, write and do basic math in 100 hours.

B. Alfalit Bolivia

Alfalit/B is a nonprofit, faith-based institution working with literacy and adult education in Bolivia. In 1965, Alfalit/I founder Eulalia Cooke moved to Cochabamba to help form Alfalit/B and expand its work to Santa Cruz, La Paz, and El Beni. It serves as the local affiliate of Alfalit/I based on a partnership agreement detailing the respective roles of the two organizations. Alfalit/I helped establish Alfalit/B and has been instrumental in guiding its development and sustaining its funding. Through the years, Alfalit/I has also played an important funding, training and mentoring role, building on Alfalit/B's years of experience in fighting illiteracy and its established networks throughout Bolivia.

Alfalit/B's vision is to construct a society where education is the fundamental instrument through which adults can improve their quality of life. Its mission is to eradicate illiteracy and promote the

human resource development of communities in need through alternative education. In its 37 years of work, Alfalit/B has helped more than 100,000 Bolivians become literate.

The organization's objectives are to: contribute to the eradication of illiteracy in Bolivia, principally in areas of greatest poverty and need; implement and expand access to adult primary education to complement the formation and integral development of men and women; train facilitators in the use of Alfalit's teaching methodology; develop and produce books/materials according to the socioeconomic realities of students; and develop partnerships and agreements with local institutions to strengthen national literacy and adult education programs.

Alfalit/B's philosophy that literacy is simply the first step in a continuing process of adult education, not an end in and of itself. In support of the MOE, the Alfalit/B plans to offer nonformal education services through 8th grade, or the full cycle of adult primary education.

1. Organizational Actors

Alfalit/B operates as a fairly decentralized organization of "loosely linked" relationships. While there is a small staff in the central office in Cochabamba, efforts are primarily focused on implementation in the field. The following is an overview of the various actors involved.

Facilitators. Facilitators are the essentially volunteer teachers who form the backbone of literacy activities around the country. Most teach two courses, with each course meeting six hours per week (24 hours per month). Facilitators receive a "bonus" of \$25 per course per month⁶ which helps cover their costs and provides a small incentive to participate.

Facilitator candidates are recruited from the communities where courses meet and are nominated by local institutions (e.g. municipalities, churches, NGOs). Alfalit reviews their qualifications according to the following criteria: secondary school graduates; some background or vocation in teaching/pedagogy; sufficient time availability; leadership skills/capacity; resident in locales where courses are offered; and bilingual in Spanish and local indigenous language. However, given the socioeconomic realities of rural communities with high illiteracy rates, the pool of qualified human resources is often quite limited.⁷

Once facilitator candidates are identified, Alfalit provides a two-day workshop on Alfalit's literacy methodology and materials, adult education, class administration, etc. At the conclusion of the workshop, Alfalit evaluates facilitators on both theory and practice (i.e. through teaching a "mock" class). The most qualified candidates are chosen to teach literacy courses, depending on the number of slots available and number of students in each community.

Promoters. Promoters oversee literacy centers and facilitators. They either work directly for Alfalit or for a partner organization. They receive an "incentive" between \$50-\$100 per month, depending on the number of centers supervised and the distance between them. Alfalit pays

⁶ As a basis of comparison, the lowest starting salary for a new Bolivian alternative education teacher is approximately \$70/month.

⁷ Based on a sample of 144 facilitators: 5% are university students (though not necessarily in education); 15% are teachers with four years of education (i.e. normal school) training; 14% are professionals (e.g., engineers); 33% are secondary school graduates; 20% have finished some portion of secondary; and 13% have finished all/part of primary.

transportation costs for its promoters, while local organizations cover transportation for theirs. It is important to note that most promoters only work on a part-time basis.

Ideally promoters have the following qualifications: minimum secondary school graduate, preferably a normal school (i.e. teacher training) graduate, resident of the local community, bilingual in Spanish and the local indigenous language, demonstrated leadership/community mobilization skills, with a calling/vocation for this type of work and a social commitment with the country.

Promoters are responsible for: observing classrooms and providing feedback to strengthen quality; monitoring facilitators' records and reports; developing monthly and quarterly statistical and narrative reports for Alfalit; promoting the creation of new centers; participating in the selection of facilitators; assisting with local partnership agreements; requesting books/materials from Alfalit and coordinating delivery to centers; and working closely with regional supervisors.

Supervisors. Supervisors are the highest level of field staff employed by Alfalit/B. They oversee activities in an entire region/department and currently earn about \$200 per month full-time. In order to be a supervisor, a person should be a professional/university graduate, or at the minimum a teacher. S/he should work in the field of education (or a related field, e.g. psychology), have good computer skills, be bilingual in the local indigenous language, possess a driver's license, and have a vocation for this type of work.

Supervisors recruit, oversee and support promoters, visit centers to monitor student progress and teacher quality (particularly in areas where there are no promoters), verify and centralize reporting on the centers in region, and promote Alfalit courses in order to open new centers. Supervisors handle operational planning (e.g. workshops, visits to centers, reports) and performance monitoring/evaluation strategies. They also contact various public and private institutions (e.g. municipalities, NGOs, churches) in order to enter into partnership agreements.

Central Office. Alfalit/B's headquarters consists of an Executive Director (ED), a 4-person Technical Team (Education Director, Pedagogical Advisor, Supervisor for Cochabamba and Education Technician), Inventory and Distribution Coordinator, Accountant and Secretary.

The office is responsible for: general oversight and quality control of the program; financial management; administrative and pedagogical support; development of annual workplans; organization and provision of training workshops; preparation of narrative/statistical reporting; relations with the MOE and other institutional partners; development and distribution of books/materials to centers; and promotion of Alfalit activities. The Technical Team provides statistical and qualitative supervision of the program in-country. The ED and Education Director are the primary contacts with the field. The Education Director is also responsible for maintaining all records and anecdotal information, while the ED serves as the official MOE liaison.

2. Organizational Partners

Public and Private Institutions. **Alfalit/B is responsible for leveraging a 20% cost-sharing or counterpart contribution in each location.** It is therefore critical that it work in close partnership with a variety of public and private institutions to implement literacy courses. These partners may include mayoral offices/ municipalities, local NGOs and community groups,

churches/religious missions, MOE offices and local primary/secondary schools, international organizations (e.g. World Food Program), etc.

Once a mutually beneficial partnership opportunity has been identified, Alfalit signs an official agreement with the organization. Local contributions range from donating space for classes or a local office for Alfalit, to paying facilitators' bonuses or providing a promoter to oversee centers. Partners also often provide school supplies (e.g. workbooks, pencils) and food/drink to students. In most cases, Alfalit's contribution to the agreement is the provision of books and educational materials, as well as the training and support of facilitators. The contribution made under each agreement is then quantified by Alfalit and tracked on a monthly basis.

Ministry of Education. Alfalit/B has worked under various agreements with the MOE since 1975. The renewal of its latest agreement has been delayed since late 2002 given a major MOE restructuring. The new agreement should be signed by the Minister in October of 2003. According to the Director of Alternative Education, "Alfalit has been a strong partner of the Ministry, does good work and is well-regarded. As long as it continues to work within overarching MOE norms/policies/strategies and collaborate with district and departmental officials, Alfalit will be an important player in adult literacy in Bolivia."

As mentioned, the MOE is currently finalizing its long-term strategy for alternative education. Part of that process has been the development⁸ of nine modules for adult education (through 8th grade) under its curricular transformation plan. While adult education NGOs have latitude to develop their own methodologies and materials, they will now be required to include the content reflected in these modules. MOE officials have committed to reviewing the content in Alfalit's materials and collaborating on their update. What this means for Alfalit, in practical terms, is a revision of its existing materials to add missing content in collaboration with the Ministry. While materials revision will be a significant task for 2nd Cycle, it would be particularly time-consuming for 3rd Cycle since fewer Alfalit materials exist for that level.

C. Adult Education in Bolivia

Adult education programs are structured according to the following MOE parameters:

Table 2. Structure of Adult Primary Education

Name	Levels/Courses	Core Competencies	Formal Grade Equivalent
1 st Cycle:	Initial	Knowledge of the basic instruments of reading and writing applied with comprehension. Oral and written expressions related to immediate environment.	Literacy
"Cycle of Basic Learning"	First Complementary	Development of logical thinking, collection/ordering of data, and pattern identification. Ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide; use a calculator to solve life and work problems.	1 st grade primary
	Second Complementary	Knowledge and application of sound nutritional habits for a healthy life; body parts and functions; ecology	2 nd grade

⁸ In conjunction with the German Association of Adult Education.

Name	Levels/Courses	Core Competencies	Formal Grade Equivalent
2 nd Cycle: “Cycle of Advanced Learning”	Third Complementary	Application of the instruments of reading and writing in the drafting of documents and description of culture and social relations in the community/neighborhood; history; rights and responsibilities of citizenship.	3 rd grade
	First Advanced	Knowledge and utilization of problem-solving skills related to weight, price, area and volume. Application in the development of budgets and work contracts.	4 th grade
	Second Advanced	Recognition/understanding of health as a condition of harmony and equilibrium in order to promote, protect and recover human and natural resources; first aid and sexual education.	5 th grade
3 rd Cycle: “Cycle of Applied Learning”	“Medio Inferior”	Knowledge of national environment/relations (geographic, cultural, social, economic, political and legal). Use of dialogue/communication to foster community and family development, and to improve integration with equity.	6 th grade
		Application of basic family and communal accounting using advanced math operations; familiarity with productive processes/projects and financial management.	7 th grade
		Understanding of ecological systems and respect for rational use of natural resources; introduction to biology and chemistry.	8 th grade

Under its USAID cooperative agreement, Alfalit has worked primarily with students in the first three courses of the 1st Cycle of Basic Learning. To a limited extent, the organization is now working with literacy graduates entering 2nd Cycle, but these more advanced students currently constitute a small minority (about 6%). Alfalit has allotted three months for the completion of each course, or nine months for the completion of 1st Cycle.

Alfalit Courses. Alfalit courses are held in *centros* or centers around the country. These are “borrowed” locations such as elementary/secondary schools (evening hours), community centers, churches, municipality offices, people’s homes, prisons, military bases, etc. Some centers host various courses during day and evening hours. Because so many sites are improvised in non-educational settings, the accommodations are often quite uncomfortable for students where they sit on the ground, write on rocks, study by candlelight, etc.

The demand for courses usually springs directly from individuals and/or groups in local areas. Once there is sufficient interest — minimum class size is 20 — facilitators are sought from the community and a center is officially opened. Facilitators then do an initial assessment of all students to place them at the appropriate course level.

Of the current student population, about 36% are enrolled in initial level, 33% in 1st complementary and 25% in 2nd complementary. Most courses are multi-grade, meaning that students from 2 or 3 different levels attend the same class. **Although Alfalit/I’s official guidance is to teach initial literacy students in separate courses, Alfalit/B often combines them to**

reach a class size of 20. This is a quality issue that must be resolved. At the end of each course, students receive official Alfalit-MOE certificates attesting to their completion of the level.

III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Evaluation Question 1 — Are literacy students learning?

Objectives:

1. Quantitative:

11,700 students will pass all three levels of basic literacy program over the course of 18 months.

2. Qualitative:

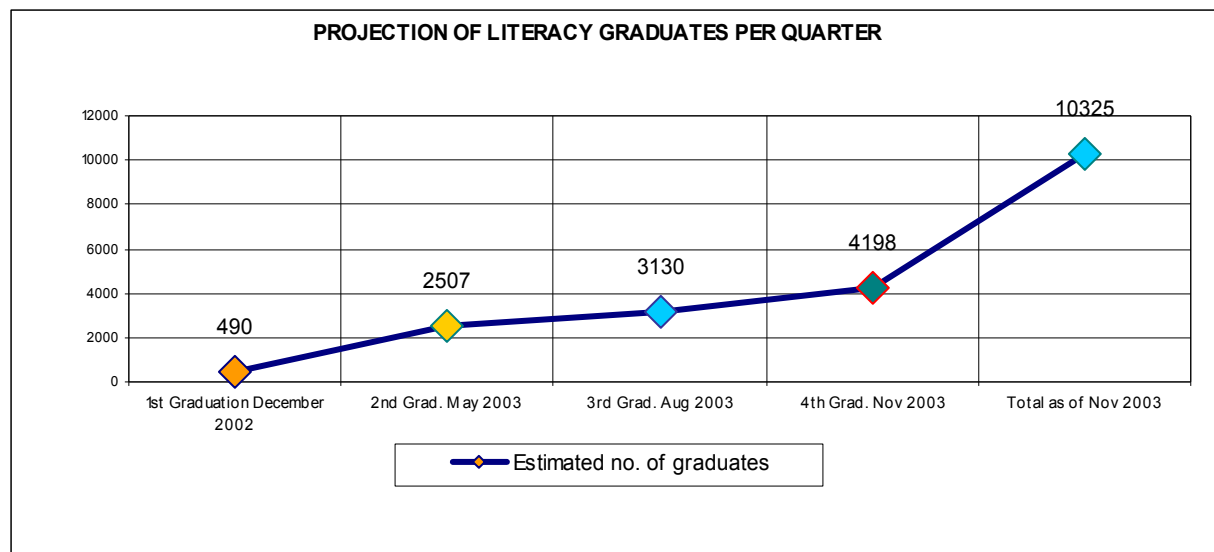
(a) When students graduate, they will be able to read, write, and do basic arithmetic within an average of 115 hours of study.

(b) Literacy graduates will have the skills to begin Basic/Primary education.

1. 11,700 students will graduate from basic literacy program by August 31

When the first phase of Alfalit’s cooperative agreement ends, it is estimated that 6100 students will have graduated from the basic literacy program, over 50% of the goal. As shown in the Table below, over 10,300 students should graduate by November – nearly 90% of the target.

Table 3. Projection of Literacy Graduates by Quarter (Dec. 2002 – Nov. 2003)



There are several important reasons for the delay:

- As will be further explained in Finding C-1, the initial start-up of activities in Bolivia was delayed for two months after the cooperative agreement was signed. It then took some time to create momentum in opening centers and recruiting students. This explains the small (490) first graduating class in December 2002.

- Although three months are allotted for each of the three courses, students are actually taking an average of 4-5 months to complete the initial literacy level. This situation is explained in greater detail under Objective 2(a).
- A drop-out rate of 28% means that many potential graduates have left the project. This abandonment increases inefficiency since materials and teaching time are lost. Now that one of the main reasons for drop-out – lack of materials – is resolved, this rate should decline in the future.

2(a). Students will be able to read, write and do basic arithmetic within an average of 115 hours of study

➤ ***FINDING A-1: Alfalit students are clearly learning to read, write and do basic math.***

Students are, however, taking about twice as long to complete the three literacy courses than originally projected: 240 hours (10 months) on average. A number of factors contribute to this situation.

One of the most important reasons is that only 13% of Alfalit students speak Spanish as their native language. Most speak Quechua (66%), Guarayo (13%), Guaraní (7%) or Aymara (6%) in their families/communities, with few opportunities to practice reading, writing or speaking Spanish on a daily basis. This circumstance obviously complicates their ability/facility to become literate in Spanish, particularly given the fact that Quechua only has three vowels.

For beginner students, facilitators must therefore explain each point in the native language before communicating it in Spanish. Many of those interviewed said there is a need for bilingual explanation throughout the 1st Cycle, further slowing the teaching process. Students' lack of comfort with Spanish was clear in many of our interviews. Even though they can read/write in Spanish, they answered our questions in the native language since they feel insecure speaking. While Alfalit does have some materials in Quechua, Guaraní, Aymara and Guarayo, many students said they only want to become literate in Spanish since it is the most “useful” language in Bolivia. Indigenous languages seem to be used more for oral communication.

Various other factors influence class participation (see Table 4). Since many participants live in rural areas, the seasonal demands of agricultural work are a serious constraint to completing courses in three months. If a student misses 1-2 months of class during planting or harvesting season, s/he will either drop out (worst case scenario) or need to repeat the missed coursework. The time needed for course completion also depends on whether a student is an absolute or functional illiterate. Absolute illiterates will obviously require more time and effort. Finally, the fact that initial literacy students are combined with others in multi-grade classes (against the guidance of Alfalit/I) means they are receiving less teaching time and individualized attention.

Table 4. Difficulties with Regular Class Attendance

Reasons Expressed by Current Students and Graduates	Frequency (No. groups)	% of Total (29 Groups)
Lack of educational materials (e.g. books)	20	69.0%
Situation of poverty (e.g. malnutrition, poor hygiene)	18	62.1%
Lack of adequate infrastructure in centers (e.g. tables/desks, chairs, blackboards, electricity)	17	58.6%
Lack of childcare (so women have to bring children to class)	15	51.7%
Physical impediments (e.g. poor eyesight and fine motor skills, illness, limitations of older students)	15	51.7%
Lack of school supplies (e.g. workbooks, pencils, chalk)	14	48.3%
Poor communication skills (e.g. fear of public speaking)	10	34.5%
Cyclical fluctuations in work (e.g. planting, harvesting)	10	34.5%
Long distances/difficult access to class	9	31.0%
Demands of work (e.g. long hours, heavy workload, migration)	8	27.6%
Lack of income/resources	8	27.6%
Little/no knowledge or practice of Spanish	8	27.6%
Lack of family/community support	7	24.1%
Inconvenient class schedules, cancellations	7	24.1%
Unemployment	5	17.2%
Lack of motivation/energy	5	17.2%

In order to verify the fact that literacy graduates are indeed learning, the evaluators reviewed tests from all three course levels, student workbooks/notebooks, and testimonial letters of graduates (see Section I.A). We also administered random “pop quizzes” during group interviews to confirm students’ abilities, and spoke with teachers about their progress. The following are the principal conclusions:

- Literacy graduates are able to read and write in Spanish, and do basic math (including multiplication and division).
- There is a generalized problem of poor spelling – with students as well as teachers. One Ministry of Education official noted that this is a weakness at all levels in Bolivia.
- Students take a test each month and a final test each quarter. The standard of proficiency is perhaps too low, but will increase in the coming year. In general, Bolivia bases grading on a 70 point system versus 100. The government requires 36 points, which is 51%. Alfalit’s requirements are higher than the government of Bolivia’s at 42 points or 60%. Alfalit plans to raise the bar to 49 points or 70% this year.
- No standardized MOE test currently exists for adult students finishing 1st Cycle; therefore, each NGO develops its own assessment tools. Alfalit is currently working with the MOE to review its final test for second complementary to ensure that MOE-defined capacities/objectives/indicators are being assessed. This is important since the existing tests appear too basic to the evaluators.
- Although native speakers of Quechua (or other languages) can effectively read/write in Spanish, they still lack practice, confidence and proficiency in oral communication.

- While students seem to be capturing reading and math relatively quickly, many expressed more trouble with writing -- perhaps because of students' difficulty with fine motor skills and/or lack of writing practice.

2(b). Students will have the necessary skills to continue basic education.

➤ ***FINDING A-2: Based on our assessment of literacy graduates, they possess the requisite knowledge and skills to continue studying in the 2nd Cycle of adult primary education.***

Currently over 1100 Alfalit students have registered for this level. Based on feedback from our group interviews, there is additional demand for these more advanced courses. What is missing is the development of complete and up-to-date books/materials, and the provision of additional facilitator training.

After completing the first three levels of the literacy program, many students write a brief testimony about their experience with Alfalit. The following are some illustrative excerpts from their letters:

- “We want to continue studying more in order to know better and to live better.”
- “We are grateful for learning to read and write in order to improve our lives... one day I would like to be a professional in order to help other people the same way.”
- “Now I can help my children and I can also improve myself more.”
- “I thank my teacher because [before] I was too lazy to study, now I regret it.”
- “Now I have children and for that reason I want to study... More to teach my kids and improve my home.”
- “Now we know how to read and write and do math, which helps us with money.”
- “We want to learn to live well.”

B. Evaluation Question 2 — As a result of the literacy classes, are students exhibiting changes in their behavior and role in the community?

Objectives:

2. Qualitative:

- (a) *The training provided to facilitators should emphasize the reinforcement of students' confidence, motivation and self-esteem.*
- (b) *When students graduate, they should have: improved confidence/self-esteem; improved life skills to obtain employment; and acquired the habit of reading and simple analysis.*
- (c) *Complementary reading materials will be designed to foster knowledge of health and nutrition, citizenship and human rights, family and community life, ethnic and governmental relationships, etc.*

➤ ***FINDING B-1: Students, graduates, family members and facilitators attest to the changes that are occurring in their lives as a result of becoming literate. While it is premature to expect major changes after only one year, students' roles and perspectives are already expanding.***

1(b). Literacy graduates should have improved confidence/self-esteem, improved life skills to obtain employment, and acquired the habit of reading and simple analysis.

It is clear that students view literacy/basic education as a means to an end. The ultimate goal is not simply being able to read and write, but actively using these skills to improve their income and quality of life.

Because changes in feelings/perspectives are a necessary precursor to changes in behavior, we have disaggregated the interview results in the tables below. With regard to Table 5, several areas are worthy of note:

- There is a clear improvement in the well-being of students, with most expressing that they feel happier as a result of participating and learning. Over half noted the pride of their family and friends.
- In terms of self-esteem, three-quarters of the groups mentioned feeling less shy/afraid as a result of learning, and 55% said they feel more confident and secure. **Since women comprised a large majority of those interviewed, these changes are significant building blocks to their increased empowerment in the future.**
- Over 60% of groups highlighted their desire to grow, improve themselves and get ahead in the future, with over half wanting to get a better job. 41% also said they now have higher expectations for the future. For participants living in difficult socioeconomic conditions, this sense of aspiration and drive is an invaluable foundation for improving their lives.
- It is encouraging that more than 80% of those interviewed said they now recognize the value and importance of education, and 55% want to continue studying through 8th grade, high school or even university. Lack of access to schools/programs after Alfalit’s basic education courses was mentioned as a barrier to achieving this goal.
- Nearly half the student groups said that knowing math has helped them with shopping, paying bills, money management, checking their paychecks, selling products in the market, figuring out change, etc. Many proudly noted that they can no longer be “tricked, taken advantage of, or lied to” in money matters.
- In terms of gender relations, **79% of the groups expressed that there is now more unity/support between men and women.** Not only are many husbands encouraging their wives to learn and supporting their studies, but couples often attend class together. In addition, more than 60% of women said they feel more equal in society. They are more aware of their rights and the fact that they should not be marginalized or discriminated against.
- In about one-quarter of the cases, husbands were not supportive of – and sometimes abusive to – their wives studying due to jealousy, machismo, feeling threatened, etc. One husband candidly remarked that he feared his wife might leave him for a man who can read and write. In one region, wives were beaten for attending the courses. In another region, wives had to bring home food for their children, in order for their husbands to allow them to attend the courses.

Most groups avidly expressed their desire to combine literacy with technical/vocational/practical skills training. Women requested training in areas such as knitting, sewing, embroidery, baking, cooking, food processing, painting on cloth and secretarial skills. Men were

interested in agriculture, livestock, carpentry, electricity, plumbing, mechanics, tailoring, shoe-making, etc. Both groups requested training in computers, home gardens, vegetable growing, framing (for export) and microenterprise development.

Table 5. Summary of Feelings Noted by Students and their Family Members

Life Skill Area/ Personal Quality	Expressed Feeling “Now...”	Frequency (No. groups)	% of Total (29 Groups)
Self-Esteem	I am less shy/timid, I’m not afraid anymore”	22	75.9%
	I feel more secure, have more confidence, a better self-image”	16	55.2%
	I am more capable”	7	24.1%
General Well-Being	I feel happier/more enthusiastic”	26	89.7%
	I am very thankful/grateful [for the opportunity to become literate]”	22	75.9%
	My family and friends are proud of me because I can read/write”	15	51.7%
Future Aspiration	I want to grow, better myself, get ahead	18	62.1%
	I want to get a better job”	15	51.7%
	I have more hope/higher expectations for the future”	12	41.4%
Utility/Value of Education	I recognize the value/importance of education”	24	82.8%
	I want technical/vocational skills in order to improve my quality of life”	24	82.8%
	I want to continue studying” (e.g. through 8 th grade, high school)	16	55.2%
	I enjoy learning/studying”	15	51.7%
	I want to learn more about how the government works/what my rights are as a citizen”	8	27.6%
Ability to Function in Society	No one can trick me or take advantage of me” (e.g. in monetary transactions)	14	48.3%
	I want to live in greater harmony with nature/the environment	12	41.4%
	I feel more useful”	7	24.1%
Gender Relations	There is more unity/support among men and women”	23	79.3%
	Women feel more equal, and that they shouldn’t be discriminated against/marginalized/mistreated”	18	62.1%
	My husband doesn’t want me to study” (i.e. because he feels jealous/ bothered)	7	24.1%

In terms of behavior change, there were also many interesting findings:

- People in more than 60% of the groups noted being more open and able to speak in public. Many women remarked that they used to be very shy/timid, but now communicate with less fear and nervousness in various settings (e.g. community meetings).
- With regard to the utility of education, every group proudly noted their ability — albeit nascent — to read, write and work with numbers. Students also recognize the value of education, with nearly 60% encouraging other family members and friends to study.
- Almost 60% of groups interviewed said they are now able to help their children with homework, whereas they previously could not understand the assignments. One woman even bragged about “catching up to and beating” her grade-school son in his studies.
- **Parental attitude is particularly noteworthy because it translates into increased school attendance of children.** Many parents noted that because they now recognize the importance of education, they are making sure to send their kids to school.
- Over half the groups said they are doing better at work and/or valuing their jobs more. Several farmers noted their ability to read insecticide labels and better use other agricultural inputs. Other women said they are doing a better job selling at the market.
- 41% of groups said they are using their new literacy skills to teach others to read and write. They specifically mentioned teaching their spouses, children, parents, siblings, friends, neighbors, grandparents, grandchildren, nieces/nephews and co-workers.
- More than 40% of groups are using their new literacy skills to write letters. People are now able to communicate with their children, relatives and friends in distant places, and one teenage boy is writing “love letters” to his girlfriend. About one-third of the groups remarked that they are now able to read the Bible.
- 45% said they are practicing better eating and/or cooking habits, as well as better hygiene and nutrition. This knowledge is largely due to the “extracurricular” talks given by facilitators and/or outside experts in literacy classes.
- Nearly three-quarters of the groups commented on the increased friendship/camaraderie among classmates. Students are generally learning to open up more with those around them, to share their lives and problems, and to help each other. There was a noticeable sense of integration among the groups interviewed.

90% of groups already report higher levels of community participation as a result of becoming literate. This participation might include:

- going to town meetings and expressing their opinions/ideas
- joining groups and associations (e.g. mothers clubs, women’s organizations)
- attending lectures, talks, courses
- meeting with local authorities, “entering their offices without fear”
- meeting with school officials
- participating as union members
- teaching their friends/neighbors to read

Table 6. Summary of Behavior Changes Noted by Students and their Family Members

Life Skill Area	Stated Change in Behavior “Now...”	Frequency (No. groups)	% of Total (29 Groups)
Communication	I can speak in public without fear, I am more open”	18	62.1%
Utility/Value of Education	I can read, write (e.g. name) and work with numbers”	29	100%
	I am helping my children with their home-work/schoolwork”	17	58.6%
	I am encouraging/supporting other family members and friends to study”	17	58.6%
	I am doing my work better/valuing my job more”	15	51.7%
	I am teaching other people to read/write/do math”	12	41.4%
	I am writing letters”	12	41.4%
	I can read the Bible”	10	34.5%
Inter-Personal/ Group Relations	There is more integration/camaraderie/ friendship among students”	21	72.4%
	I get along better with my companions”	18	62.1%
	I share my problems with my companions, so we can solve/discuss them together”	14	48.3%
Community Participation	I participate more in the community” (e.g. in town meetings, mothers’ clubs)	26	89.7%
	I can take care of any type of procedure/ formality” (e.g. getting a carnet)	12	41.4%
	I can interact/deal better with different authorities and/or organizations”	12	41.4%
Health	I have better eating and/or cooking habits, better nutrition”	13	44.8%
	I have better hygiene”	13	44.8%

C. Evaluation Question 3 — Is Alfalit delivering services effectively? How can the organization be strengthened?

Objectives:

1. Quantitative:

- (a) Register 15,600 students (15 years and older) in the program through referrals from various organizations, with an emphasis on women.
- (b) Provide 202,800 student literacy books/complementary materials, and 5460 instructional books/manuals for teachers.
- (c) Extend the program to reach at least 250 communities in three departments.
- (d) Establish 210 literacy centers.
- (e) Train and develop 420 volunteer facilitators and expect that 210 will stay with the program.
- (f) Conduct 8 literacy training sessions for new facilitators and 4 workshops for active facilitators.

2. Qualitative:

- (a) Facilitators will be trained to apply Alfalit’s methodology for teaching illiterate adults.
- (b) Complementary reading materials (i.e. designed to teach individuals how to improve their health, welfare and community development) will be developed.

➤ ***FINDING C-1: Various delays in start-up have affected project implementation.***

The start-up phase of any new project is always a navigation of expected and unexpected challenges. For an organization facing USAID policies and regulations for the first time, the process can be even more daunting. While this has definitely been the case for Alfalit/I and Alfalit/B, both organizations have come through the steepest part of the learning curve and emerged stronger. The following were the principal delays experienced:

- Although the USAID agreement was signed on March 1, Alfalit/I received its first tranche of funding in late April, and Alfalit/B in early May. Activities were thus in “skeletal mode” during this period, delaying the opening of literacy centers and the recruitment of students. The annual workplan should have been adjusted to reflect this 2-month delay.
- Compliance with procurement regulations was cumbersome and lengthy in obtaining waivers to purchase foreign-made vehicles appropriate for the road conditions in Bolivia. Since the waiver was granted in October, the vehicles weren’t available until late 2002 – further delaying the opening of centers.
- Although office computers arrived in Bolivia in August, the Alfalit/I statistical software package didn’t function properly until February 2003 due to the office’s lack of systems knowledge. A data entry contractor entered the huge backlog of data into the system, but his computer crashed in May and most of the work was lost. Although Alfalit/B did not have the data entered using the Alumnos program, they were maintaining their statistics in Excel. As of September 2003, all data has been re-entered, verified, and is available in the Alumnos program.
- The redesign, printing and shipment of books from the United States have been the most serious delay. This point is discussed in detail under Finding C-3.

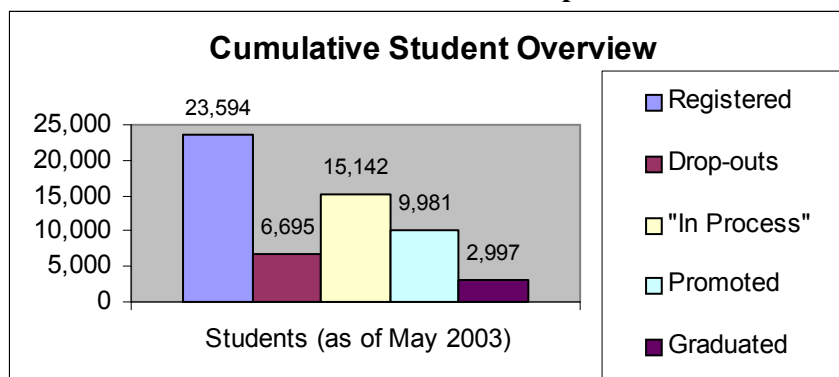
➤ ***FINDING C-2: Despite these implementation delays, Alfalit has far surpassed most project objectives.***

1(a). 15,600 students will be registered, with an emphasis on women

Since Alfalit/B began opening literacy centers in 2002, it has registered over 23,500 students⁹ – about 50% more than the target. Although registration started off slow in the initial months, student and community demand for literacy services has grown exponentially. Most students are laborers, farmers or workers in the informal sector, generally from poor rural and marginal urban areas. Approximately 70% are absolute, and 30% functional, illiterates.

In line with the project’s gender emphasis, three-quarters of participating students are women. This is significant given the traditional marginalization and high illiteracy of rural women in particular.

⁹ Given various difficulties with data collection in-country, the statistics presented have a $\pm 7\%$ margin of error.

Table 7. Overview of Alfalit Student Population

Despite the high registration rate, the number of students “in process” is about 15,000. This reflects the fact that 28% of those registered have abandoned classes. As Alfalit predicted a 25% drop-out rate, this situation is in line with initial projections. The principal reasons for student drop-out are:

- Lack of Alfalit materials (discussed in detail below). Given the extensive delay in the delivery of new books, many students lost their interest and motivation to participate. Not only were many people disappointed and frustrated, but Alfalit (as an institution) lost some credibility in the eyes of communities. This circumstance was exacerbated when the existing borrowed materials began to run out. This seems to be reflected in the number of drop-outs: from an average of 400 per month in 2002, the figure has risen to about 580 per month in 2003.
- The demands of agricultural work. Since most Alfalit students live in rural areas with seasonal harvests, many students are unable to attend class during certain times of the year. While more than half eventually return, it is difficult for them to reintegrate after missing months of class. More advanced students have a better chance of regaining their momentum since they have a stronger base.
- Various other difficulties to student participation (see Table 4).

1(c)/(d). The program will reach at least 250 communities in three departments, and will open 210 literacy centers.

The demand for literacy courses has grown dramatically throughout the country since the USAID project began. As a result, Alfalit/B is now working in seven departments and more than 500 communities. Moreover, as of May 31, 688 centers were functioning (of a total 814 opened) – more than triple the target of 210. This expansion is a result of: Alfalit’s promotional activities (e.g. radio spots, flyers, church announcements); word of mouth between participants and their friends/family; Alfalit’s long presence and credibility in Bolivia; demonstrated program results; and the establishment of successful partnerships in many communities.

While this growth has greatly improved access to literacy courses, it has generally been demand-led rather than strategic in nature. In the Alfalit philosophy of “serving God through serving others,” it is understandably difficult for the organization to turn interested communities away or

to deny students the opportunity to read and write. This relatively unmanaged growth, however, has burdened the project in several ways:

- The original budget – which was formulated for a given number of centers, facilitators and students – must be stretched to accommodate the unexpected expansion. This translates into fewer books per student, a much higher number of centers per supervisor/promoter, additional incentive bonuses for facilitators, and increased transportation costs.
- It has been very difficult to adequately monitor/supervise the centers as a result of insufficient staff – particularly promoters – and transportation challenges (e.g. huge distances. It seems the growth has outpaced Alfalit/B's capacity to effectively manage it.
- The quality of initial facilitator training workshops has been diluted by large numbers of participants and limited timeframes (generally 1-2 days).
- The provision of periodic facilitator “reinforcement” workshops has been limited due to Alfalit staff trainer constraints and large numbers of participating facilitators.

Despite Alfalit's admirable efforts to keep pace with the growing interest around the country, those interviewed expressed that there is additional unmet demand in many communities, as well as in the remaining two departments of Beni and Pando. There seems to be demand for at least 900-1000 centers, meaning an additional 200-300 than currently in existence. The following comments are illustrative:

Current Students/Graduates:

- *“It would have been better to learn/study when we were young, but this opportunity has presented itself and we're not going to waste it.”*
- *“We want to learn in order to be able to teach others in our communities.”*
- *“I would like these courses to be offered in my neighborhood and at the market because there are no classes there. We also need more teachers because there aren't enough – there's great need in the countryside.”*
- *“We need more help in remote zones – we also need more facilitators and more coverage.”*
- *“Now we can't stop/quit learning because we want to get ahead in life.”*

Facilitators:

- *“I feel very satisfied working on this project because people in the country need a lot more help than those in cities.”*
- *“Farmers have every right to learn to read and write.”*
- *“Students have really liked the courses. There's interest in the whole community – women, adults, teenagers – everyone.”*
- *“There's so much more to be done, many communities are lacking, we need a lot more help/support in the future.”*

Community Leaders:

- *“We would like this to continue in the future, we don't want to leave the work half done, we need continuity.”*
- *“We have to replicate Alfalit to the corners of the region. [The project] should go deeper – we need at least 15 or 20 more years in Punata. There aren't enough services now because there's great demand. We're at your disposal to help in any way you need.”*

- *“Once civil society is literate, people have more choices, more options, more capacity, better job opportunities – otherwise they are marginalized.”*
- *“This work is very important because people are forgetting how to read and write; they need to participate. They want to advance and get ahead in life.”*
- *“Literacy helps poor people in the countryside recuperate their dignity.”*

Partners:

- *“[This project] changes students’ quality of life – there’s a lot more demand than what’s being satisfied now.”*
- *“Please continue these courses in more depth, with more material, do a stronger campaign to eradicate illiteracy in all of Bolivia. We hope Alfalit continues with stronger and more intense support.”*

Given limited budgetary resources, there is a tradeoff between future expansion and consolidation of existing centers. This is a strategic issue for USAID and Alfalit further discussed in Section VI.

1(e). 420 facilitators will be trained and developed, with a 50% retention rate

As mentioned above, Alfalit/B has far exceeded the target in this area. Of an initial 1000+ candidates trained¹⁰, 724 passed Alfalit’s tests and were officially accepted as facilitators. This is over 70% more than the target of 420. Of those registered, about 100 have dropped out, with 598 currently working. This is an impressive retention rate of nearly 82%.

There are several benefits to having nearly triple the roster of facilitators: lower student-teacher ratios; increased capacity to handle demand for additional centers; and the development of community leaders/educators. There are also downsides to exceeding this target. It is a burden on existing project staff to have to train so many people; the quality of workshops can be compromised; and there are fewer resources available for reinforcement workshops, an important element of follow-up. The biggest impact is budgetary as hundreds more facilitators receive “incentive bonuses” each month.

Since there was an initial facilitator workshop scheduled during our evaluation visit, we were personally able to observe the first day of training. Our observations (albeit limited) were that:

- the introduction was long and focused on religion (discussed in more detail below);
- the presentation/methodology was more vertically oriented than participatory, so people were not very actively involved;
- while the first day of training is supposed to be devoted to educational theory, relatively little time was spent on these important issues. Much of the morning was dedicated to the ED’s introduction, while much of the afternoon focused on paperwork requirements, report preparation, course administration, etc. Since there were only 10 facilitator slots available (and 17 candidates) it seems this information could have been imparted later to those actually selected. Apparently this is a change that Alfalit/B made which is not in line with Alfalit/I guidance.

¹⁰ Even if they are not interested in serving as facilitators, many people want Alfalit training because it helps them professionally (e.g. they get official recognition from the Ministry of Education).

- the two-day period allotted for initial training is insufficient. Considering the extensive amount of material to be covered, the workshops should be expanded (see discussion in 2(a) below).
- 1(f). 8 training sessions will be held for new facilitators, and 4 sessions for active facilitators.

Given the unexpectedly large number of facilitators (and applicants) trained, Alfalit has held 55 initial workshops -- seven times the number projected. In terms of “reinforcement” training for active facilitators, about 20 sessions have been held. However, rather than formal, two-day workshops (as originally envisioned), these trainings have generally been shorter (1/2 or one day) and less structured. This explosion of training has understandably been difficult for four Alfalit staff members to handle, particularly when they need more training themselves. There has also been a cost in terms of their ability to visit/supervise centers and provide adequate follow-up training.

2(a). Facilitators will be trained to apply Alfalit’s methodology.

The following areas are currently covered in initial facilitator workshops: Adult Education; Psychology of the Adult Learner (with an emphasis on illiterate individuals); How to Establish and Run a Center; The Role of the Facilitator; Bolivia’s Educational Reform; Education Principles; Alfalit’s Methodology; The Teaching-Learning Process; and Curriculum Planning.

The consensus of most facilitators interviewed was that two days of training are insufficient to adequately address, absorb and discuss the amount of information presented. Taking into account that many are teaching for the first time, facilitators need a stronger initial foundation to prepare them for classes and enable them to effectively apply Alfalit’s methodology, a current weakness in the project. All groups thought the training should be expanded by 1-2 days.

Most facilitators said they like the Alfalit methodology and materials, but need more support through periodic reinforcement workshops. This would allow them to regularly exchange information and experiences, discuss and jointly solve problems, deal with certain topics (e.g. adult psychology) in more depth, and reinforce the practical application of the methodology. In our interviews, most facilitators requested 1-2 days of formal reinforcement training per quarter.

2(b). Complementary materials will be developed.

Once students learn the mechanics of reading and writing, it is critical that they practice these skills in order to strengthen their reading comprehension and develop a habit/enjoyment of reading. Alfalit offers a number of complementary reading materials for 1st Cycle students: Stories and Sayings, My House, Susana Goes to School, I Am a Worker, My Neighbors and Community, and *Donde Hay Amor*, among many others. Alfalit students also use books provided on environment and ecology, including home gardens and solar kitchens, as well as literature on history, Bolivian legends/stories, and simplified versions of classic novels. Alfalit also has bilingual Quechua/Spanish primers and reading books.

In close partnership with the MOE, Alfalit is developing additional materials in the areas of:

- citizenship and human rights (including gender issues);
- nutritious eating and cooking;
- health, hygiene and home/natural remedies;
- family planning and child care;
- economics/production (i.e. basic money management, how to get credit/loans, how banks work, how to organize microenterprises);

➤ ***FINDING C-3: The delivery of books and materials is the principal objective that has been delayed.***

Although Alfalit had an existing inventory of books in stock when the USAID project began, they had been produced by the Biblical Societies and thus contained religious content. The new USAID books therefore needed revision both to exclude this content and to make the materials culturally sensitive and relevant to Bolivia's context. While this revision process was underway, Alfalit "lent" its existing literacy materials to USAID in order to launch the project as quickly as possible. As a result, over 37,000 books were distributed early in the project.

The first delay occurred in the initial publication, since the design work was basically done from scratch. The second delay stemmed from USAID regulations requiring book printing in the U.S. — a much more lengthy and expensive process than in Bolivia. The third came when the first books were printed and air-shipped in October, and Customs asked Alfalit to pay duty.¹¹ After months of efforts to obtain duty-free status, Alfalit paid \$6000 for taxes/storage to release the books in January 2003. The most serious delay occurred when over 85,000 books were shipped by sea in January. Based on a series of bureaucratic requirements, Customs refused to grant the duty-free release of the container. Alfalit tried to resolve the problem for months, even appealing to the president of the Bolivian Senate for help. The books were finally released during our evaluation visit in late May.

This delay had a significant impact on the project since many students had few or no books. Despite Alfalit's explanation of the problem and reassurance that it would be resolved, many communities began to feel disillusioned and frustrated. As a result, the student drop-out rate increased and many centers closed. This situation should not reoccur in the future since a clause in Alfalit's new agreement states that the MOE will facilitate the release of all materials from Customs.

➤ ***FINDING C-4: Groups at all levels want and need additional training.***

One of our generalized findings is that most Alfalit volunteers and staff members are doing the best job they can, but also recognize that more training will enable them to better fulfill their responsibilities. The following is a summary of the feedback provided in our interviews.

¹¹ There was confusion due to the fact that Alfalit is a USAID/Washington – rather than a USAID/Bolivia – project.

