



**USAID** | **NICARAGUA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# CHANGING HOW STUDENTS LEARN, TEACHERS TEACH, AND SCHOOLS ARE ORGANIZED

Latin American and Caribbean Education Profiles 1999–2004



## **PROFILES OF USAID EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS: INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES**

This publication is one in a series profiling the recent work of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the education sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It is intended for all who are interested in learning more about USAID, international development, and education activities in the LAC region. While USAID currently has offices or development activities in 17 countries throughout the region, its education development efforts are concentrated in eight: the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru.

The purpose of the series is to provide information on how the U.S. government is responding to diverse education needs in these countries through a variety of initiatives—ranging from innovative projects that increase educational access for underserved populations to efforts to foster policy dialogue and better decision-making in the sector. Bringing these initiatives to life typically requires coordination with and participation from a variety of international, national, and local partners.

The publications highlight USAID efforts in these countries during a five year period, 1999–2004. Each profile treats one country and includes a succinct analysis of key problems that limit access to quality education there, defining those challenges within historical, political, and social contexts. The publication outlines USAID's strategies for targeting its education investments, describes specific projects for addressing key issues, and shares lessons learned/best practices to improve future programming.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Education Team of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean expresses its gratitude to the dozens of officials at the USAID missions in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru who gave generously of their time in welcoming the editorial team to the host countries, squiring the team's writers and researchers throughout the missions, furnishing ample information and photographs, and reviewing the documents through successive iterations to ensure that the information herein would not only be factually accurate but also portray the true spirit of the featured missions.



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Students learning through cooperative activities in BASE II-supported school.

**COVER:** Students and teacher interact together in BASE II-supported school.

All images courtesy of U.S. Agency for International Development.

# NICARAGUA AT A GLANCE



## GEOGRAPHY

**Total Population:** 5,600,000 (mid-2004 estimate)  
**Land Area:** 120,254 sq. km (slightly smaller than New York State)  
**Capital City:** Managua (population 1 million)

## GOVERNMENT

**Government Type:** Republic  
**Current President:** Enrique Bolaños, elected to a five-year term in November 2001, inaugurated January 2002

## ECONOMY

**Total Gross Domestic Product:** US \$2.4 billion (2001 estimate)  
**Per Capita GDP:** \$767 (one of the most unequal income distributions in the world—2001 estimate)  
**Population Below Poverty Line:** 46 percent (of which 15 percent live in extreme poverty—2001 estimate)  
**Human Development Index:** .643 (compared with .777 LAC regional average—2001 estimate)  
**Overall Donor Assistance:** \$3 billion in grants and loans from 1997 through 2002

## HEALTH AND CULTURE

**Median Age:** 20.4 years  
**Life Expectancy at Birth:** 69 years  
**Annual Population Growth Rate:** 2.7 percent (one of the highest rates in the western hemisphere—2004 estimate)  
**Chronic Child Malnutrition:** 20 percent of children under 5 (has dropped from 25 percent in 1998)  
**Languages:** Spanish, English Creole, and indigenous languages (Miskitu, Sumo-Mayangna) on the Caribbean coast  
**Official Languages:** Spanish (national), indigenous languages (Caribbean coast)  
**Ethnic Groups:** Mestizo (mixed European and indigenous) 69 percent, white 17 percent, black (Jamaican origin) 9 percent, indigenous 5 percent

## EDUCATION

**Compulsory Education:** 6 years (ages 7–12, though not enforced)  
**Literacy Rate:** 67.5 percent (female 67.8 percent/male 67.2 percent—2003 estimate)  
**Primary Completion Rate:** 45 percent  
**Secondary Completion Rate:** 45.2 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Primary Net Enrollment:** 83.5 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Secondary Net Enrollment:** 38.7 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Tertiary Gross Enrollment:** 12 percent (2000 estimate)  
**Public Expenditures on Education Sector:** 4 percent of GDP (2002 estimate)

## **NICARAGUA AT A GLANCE**

**NICARAGUA HAS ESTABLISHED A NETWORK OF 170 “MODEL SCHOOLS” NATIONWIDE TO TRAIN TEACHERS BETTER, DEVELOP BETTER EDUCATION MATERIALS, STRENGTHEN INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION, AND PROMOTE ACTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION.**

The educational system in Nicaragua has changed over the past 15 years. Despite numerous beneficial outcomes, such as increased enrollment rates and improvements in school infrastructure, the country still suffers some of the worst education statistics in the region.

From 1995 through 2002, USAID’s education program in Nicaragua sought to foster better education and, in turn, healthier and smaller families, to develop the skills and attitudes needed for development within the country. Education activities emphasized strengthening teacher performance, involving parents and community members in education, implementing a more effective curriculum, and decentralizing the education system. Given the success of model schools, the concept has now caught on throughout the country. Some 2,000 other public primary schools have started to adopt the approach in hopes of attaining more effective teachers, strong bilingual education, increased community participation, and school autonomy.

**USAID/Nicaragua’s 2003–2008 Country Strategy emphasizes:**

- 1) Increased and improved social sectors and transparency.
- 2) Increased and improved basic education opportunities.
- 3) Efforts to improve the efficiency of expenditures and resource allocation.
- 4) Support for the expansion of decentralized services.

**USAID/NICARAGUA AIMS TO STRENGTHEN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM NATIONWIDE THROUGH BROAD-REACHING, PARTICIPATORY, AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING MODELS.**

“The quality and relevance of primary and secondary schooling in LAC countries continue to cause concern, as the majority of students attend weak and underfunded schools and fail to acquire basic skills in mathematics, language, and science. Fewer than 30 percent of students in the region complete secondary school, and many of those who do finish lack the skills to compete in the workplace, let alone in an increasingly competitive global economy. USAID programs are improving educational systems by developing innovative pilots and more effective service delivery models, many of which are being expanded by host governments and multilateral development banks.”

—Senate Testimony of Adolfo Franco,  
USAID Assistant Administrator for  
the LAC Bureau, March 2004

#### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN INVESTMENTS, USAID/NICARAGUA

“A better educated population is critical to Nicaragua becoming competitive in the global market, which increases possibilities for healthier households. Quality education is fundamental to achieving these changes. We have built a model with the government of Nicaragua over the past 10 years that has helped establish a foundation for modernizing the Nicaraguan educational system. Our future programs will support a transformation of public schools nationwide to take advantage of the many lessons learned on providing quality primary education with full participation of students, families, and communities. This will help Nicaragua reach the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals and Nicaragua’s Education for All/Fast Track Initiative goals. There is also tremendous opportunity for cross-cutting support and coordination with the trade capacity and economic growth program. Nicaragua’s enabling environment for economic growth, particularly in existing human capital, is so problematic that further human investment may be an important precondition for viable and sustainable economic growth and competitiveness in the Central American and global markets. Nicaragua needs to see more youth moving into secondary education after a progressively better primary education experience—thus becoming better educated and able to take advantage of the economic opportunities the Nicaraguan government and we hope to foment.”

—Alonzo Wind

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# PART I

## BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

### EDUCATION CONDITIONS IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua has made many significant changes to its educational system over the past 15 years, resulting in numerous beneficial outcomes. Progress has included increases in enrollment rates, improvements in school infrastructure, and the decentralization of many primary and most secondary schools. Considering that Nicaragua has effected these changes in the face of political turmoil, one of the highest poverty rates in Latin America, and a population in which 43 percent are under 15, these gains are noteworthy.

Nevertheless, the country faces enormous challenges. Nicaragua has some of the worst education statistics in the

Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region.<sup>1</sup> The average Nicaraguan has completed less than five years of schooling, and 831,140 children (ages 3 to 18) remain outside the formal education system.<sup>2</sup> Although net primary enrollment has improved to 83.5 percent, fewer than 40 percent of adolescents of secondary school age are enrolled in school. Access to higher education is limited to a select few. Of 100 children who enter first grade, only 45 complete grade 6 without repeating a grade, 11 graduate from high school, and less than 3 graduate from university.

Similar to most of its neighboring countries, Nicaragua exhibits great disparities between socioeconomic groups and urban-rural populations. Though the average schooling of the nonpoor adult population in 2001 was

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent overview (in Spanish) of the educational sector in Nicaragua, see *Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe (PREAL)* 2004 national "report card" at [www.preal.cl/prog\\_educativo/RCNicaragua.pdf](http://www.preal.cl/prog_educativo/RCNicaragua.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> MECD, *Estadísticas de Bolsillo, Educación para la Vida* 2004.



Students in CETT-supported classroom working on their reading skills.

6.6 years, an extremely poor person had completed only 2.2 years. Compared with a nonpoor urban literacy rate of 91.3 percent, the level in extremely poor rural areas was only 53.9 percent. These equity gaps are especially pronounced on the Caribbean coast, home to most of the nation's indigenous groups and where 80 percent of the population lives in poverty.

Despite being one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, Nicaragua designates a relatively high share of its national budget (18 percent) for education investment. Given the small size of the overall gross domestic product, however, the resources available are still woefully insufficient. This is reflected in the lowest teachers' salaries in the LAC region—an average of \$61.50 per month for a primary school teacher in 2003. Moreover, public spending per student in the year 2002 was only \$5.10 at the preschool level, \$83.00 for primary, and \$38.40 for secondary.

The financial strain is exacerbated by high repetition and desertion (often tied to family poverty), evidenced by the fact that it takes a typical student more than 10 years to complete primary school. This systemic inefficiency is a drain on scarce resources, with an estimated \$9.7 million of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports' (MECD's) primary education budget

spent on repetition in 2003. Finally, because of a law allocating 6 percent of the national budget to higher education, the ratio of university to primary school per student spending is nearly 8:1, among the most inequitable in the region.

Since the early 1990s, Nicaragua has experimented with reforms to improve education access and quality under the concepts of humanistic constructivism<sup>3</sup> and curricular transformation to promote active learning. This has entailed a host of ongoing adjustments to school curriculum, classroom pedagogy, and teacher training. A National Education Plan for 2001–2015 outlines the government of Nicaragua's long-term vision for the Nicaraguan education system. It is based on principles such as the right to equity of and access to quality education; the integration of civil society as a key participant in the educational process; and education as an economic and social investment in human capital.

## **USAID REGIONAL STRATEGY**

In response to dramatically reduced region-wide funding levels—from \$190 million in 1990 to \$52.7 million in 2004—USAID education programming in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has shifted from large national programs to smaller, targeted geographic areas and an emphasis on

<sup>3</sup> According to *constructivismo humanista*, learners acquire knowledge and understanding mainly by "constructing" these through interactions with others. In constructivist classrooms, each child follows an individual path with the teacher's help and guidance, using the resources available in a classroom environment arranged for that purpose.

policy dialogue. Bilateral mission education activities are based on combination of four overarching regional objectives: improved *access*, *equity*, *efficiency*, and *quality*. The LAC Regional Education Program, based in USAID/ Washington, supports initiatives under the Summit of the Americas,<sup>4</sup> the promotion of education reform in the region, and the Intermediate Results of 1) improved environment for education reform, 2) improved skills of teachers and administrators, and 3) improved relevance and skills of workforce.

The education programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua now operate under the framework of the Central America and Mexico (CAM) Regional Strategy. The CAM strategy directs bilateral and regional USAID investment toward three performance arenas—*just and democratic governance*, *economic freedom*, and *investment in people*—closely aligned with Millennium Challenge Account<sup>5</sup> goals. As a result, USAID education activities in Central America will now be centered on achieving:

- Improved access, quality, and efficiency of basic education.
- Increased and more effective decentralized investments in education.
- Increased and more efficient expenditures by ministries of education.

- The establishment of private sector alliances.
- Greater community involvement in education.
- Innovative approaches to increasing and improving educational opportunities.

## USAID/NICARAGUA: HISTORY AND STRATEGIES IN EDUCATION

The U.S. government has been active in Nicaragua's education sector since re-establishing a presence in the country in 1990. USAID is currently the largest bilateral education donor. Activities over the past five years have been guided by two USAID Country Strategies—the first from 1995 through 2002 (extended to encompass Hurricane Mitch reconstruction activities), and the latest from 2003 through 2008.

The previous strategy addressed the constraints to human capacity development by fostering better educated, healthier, and smaller families. Education was viewed as a key factor underlying other sectors—a stable, functioning democracy, employment opportunities, and improved health—and primary education was seen as the most cost-effective way to foster the skills and attitudes needed for development in Nicaragua.

<sup>4</sup> For background information on the Summit of the Americas, see [www.usaid.gov/regions/lac/summit.html](http://www.usaid.gov/regions/lac/summit.html) and [usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/summit/\\_of\\_americas.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/summit/_of_americas.html).

<sup>5</sup> The Millennium Challenge Account is a Bush administration initiative to increase assistance to those developing countries whose governments rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom. For more on this initiative, see [www.mca.gov](http://www.mca.gov), [www.usaid.gov/mca](http://www.usaid.gov/mca), and [www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html).



**Alicia Slate, USAID/Nicaragua education officer, identifying BASE project model schools.**



**First grade students working on independent reading assignment in USAID-supported school.**

The strategy emphasized improvements in the quality and efficiency of primary education through strengthening teacher performance, implementing more effective curricula, decentralizing the education system, and increasing parent/community participation. Education activities took place under the BASE (for Basic Education) Project, from 1994 through 1998.

The 2003–2008 Nicaragua Country Strategy builds on the considerable gains achieved under its previous program and responds to the new CAM Regional Strategy that calls on USAID missions to move their emphasis from service delivery to policy reform efforts. This marks a shift from how USAID/Nicaragua did business in the past, as the Mission decided that geographic “niche” projects will not result in the national-level impact sought. As a result, activities in education now reflect an explicit prioritization of investments that will have a national influence—good governance in the social sectors and implementation of sound policies that address key constraints to development.

Under the Strategic Objective “Investing in People: Healthier, Better Educated People,” current activities incorporate a two-pronged approach to achieving 1) increased and improved social sector investments and transparency and 2) increased and improved basic education opportunities. USAID seeks to improve efficiency in social sector expenditures and government capacities to plan and

manage education investments, and to decentralize services and investments for greater impact. A critical element is the implementation of policies by MECD that will help ensure resources are having the greatest impact on access to quality basic education. Private sector alliances and greater community voice in decision-making will also be promoted as means to increase impact and transparency.

USAID will help achieve greater educational opportunities by building on the mission’s successful basic education programs, BASE I and BASE II. Given proven results in BASE “model schools,” the MECD decided in late 2003 to replicate USAID’s approach to other primary schools throughout the country. This is an ideal situation for rollout of a successful USAID activity—combining government ownership, other donor support, and USAID technical leadership.

USAID funding for education has remained essentially stable—between \$3.0 million and \$3.5 million per year since 1999. While additional funds were added as part of the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative strategy, the Mission’s overall funding level for the County Strategy period was not altered.

## **OVERVIEW**

Part 2 of this report profiles two of USAID/Nicaragua’s projects and two regional programs. A list of suggested reading about other USAID projects in

Nicaragua—as well as more about the four projects featured herein—appears at the end of this publication.

The *BASE II Project* reflects a long-term effort to modernize teaching methodologies in both multigrade and single grade classrooms and to promote greater community support for schools. Under the mission's Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Program, the *Education Reconstruction Component* was designed to restore infrastructure and provide psycho-social services in targeted primary schools. The *Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training* Program works to improve reading instruction in grades 1–3 as part of a regional Presidential Initiative. Under the *Global Development Alliance*, the Model School Expansion Partnership integrates private sector donations with model schools reforms.

Part 3 spells out the impact of USAID education activities in Nicaragua over the past five years, such as the dramatic increase in the number of students reaching fifth grade—22 percentage points higher in target schools than the national average. This includes lessons learned from the various USAID/Nicaragua projects, explaining (among other things) the successful elements of the “model school” approach as outlined in a recent mid-term BASE II Project evaluation. The section concludes with an overview of what USAID plans to achieve in Nicaragua by 2008 through concentrating on social sector investments, educational accountability, and nationwide expansion of interventions to improve education access and quality.

#### MESSAGE FROM USAID/NICARAGUA EDUCATION TEAM

**“The root of poor student performance in the Nicaraguan education system lies in a poor start in the first three grades. During the past five years, USAID’s Basic Education program has been implemented largely through the BASE II Project with the MECD. The principal objective has been to enhance primary school quality in Nicaragua through interventions that include classroom reform, active participatory learning, and community participation. A centerpiece of the program is the training of teachers combined with continuous support and follow-up for implementing classroom reforms—in other words, the APA methodology: *Aprendo, Practico y Aplico* (I learn, I practice, I apply). The program has demonstrated that students can improve their learning outcomes even in conditions of poverty. Improving students’ retention rates and achieving higher completion rates, however, requires improving teachers’ skills and sensitizing them to their roles as facilitators of learning processes. One of our most significant accomplishments has been the MECD’s recognition of the benefits of this approach as a way to improve primary education opportunities, along with its plan to extend these opportunities to all public primary schools in the country. We are gratified by the results to date and are ambitious for what can be accomplished now under a sectorwide approach for Nicaragua, in which government and donors are in full partnership.”**

**—Antonio Osorio and Alicia Slate**



# PART 2

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## ACTIVITY PROFILES

### **BASE II PROJECT**

IMPROVING EDUCATION QUALITY IN MODEL SCHOOLS



### **EDUCATION RECOVERY COMPONENT**

HURRICANE MITCH RECONSTRUCTION



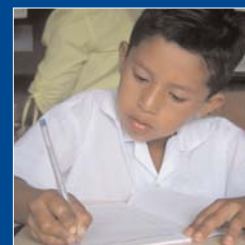
### **REGIONAL PROJECTS**

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING



### **GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE**

MODEL SCHOOL EXPANSION PARTNERSHIP



in the classroom and transmit these methodologies to fellow teachers.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

Building on the experience of the original BASE program, activities are broadly designed to increase teacher effectiveness, strengthen model schools, support bilingual education, encourage community participation, and support decentralization and school autonomy. Activities include:

- Increasing the effectiveness of teachers, including expanding the National Training Network; strengthening the effectiveness of teacher training schools; training teachers, directors, and supervisors; and expanding the model schools system.
- Promoting access to quality education for underserved populations. This effort involves developing multigrade instruction in rural schools around the country and intercultural bilingual education for ethnic minorities living in rural communities of the Atlantic coastal region.
- Promoting parent and community participation in schools and educational processes. Assistance to teachers in the classroom takes a multitude of forms, including 1) preparing teaching materials for use in classrooms, 2) forming study circles after school to help children overcome learning difficulties, 3) visiting parents to persuade them to

send their children to school, 4) raising funds needed for school improvements, 5) organizing and building school libraries and kitchens, and 6) participating in school councils.

- Strengthening the MECD in support of decentralized primary education, by developing and using educational statistics and applied research for policymaking and integrating management information systems into MECD operations.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

The BASE II Project has resulted in more than a 20 percent increase in active student participation across all model schools. The most notable progress was in Atlantic coast bilingual schools where learning attainment has also increased. In single and multigrade model school classrooms, 89 percent attained competency on the Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) test for reading and writing in 2003, compared with 59 percent in 2001. SSL oral comprehension increased 29 percent in third grade bilingual classrooms over the same period, with a 20 percent improvement in fourth grade.

The use of small-group learning strategies has increased in model schools by 22.8 percent, reaching a high of 58 percent in the regular system bilingual model school sample in 2003. Participation in student government—another important element of classroom reform—has dramatically increased in regular (graded) model schools, from 3.2 percent in 1998 to 24.5 percent in 2003. A huge gain in regular bilingual schools also took place—from 0.2 percent in 1999 to 14.7 percent in 2003.

BASE II has supported the development of support mechanisms designed to become locally sustainable. These include teacher quality circles, a National Training Network, teacher training schools, model schools where trainees practice teaching, and resource centers where teachers make classroom learning materials. BASE II also played a critical role in helping the MECD install Ed\*Assist—a state-of-the-art system for analyzing and presenting educational statistics—and in developing the Educational Mapping software now in use nationwide. As a result, more reliable and accessible data are now available to help MECD officials make informed decisions.



Students enjoying small-group work assignment.

# BASE II PROJECT

## IMPROVING EDUCATION QUALITY IN MODEL SCHOOLS

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development with Juárez and Associates

Dates: March 1999 to September 2005

Funding: \$15,113,528<sup>6</sup>

### WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Nicaragua faces numerous challenges related to educational access, equity, and quality. One indication that the current system is not preparing qualified students is the fact that so few possess core competencies. In applying standardized tests to more than 16,000 students in 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (MECD) found that only 8 percent of third graders and 5 percent of sixth graders demonstrated proficiency in Spanish. In mathematics, 14 percent of third graders and only 1 percent of sixth graders were deemed proficient.<sup>7</sup>

### WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

Since 1994, USAID's flagship education program has consisted of the BASE and BASE II Program. The activities have supported the shared objectives of USAID and the Nicaraguan government of increased access to quality education and greater student achievement. BASE II continues the long-term effort to improve primary education quality by promoting modern teaching and active learning methodologies and parent and community support for schools.

The program in Nicaragua is the latest iteration of the *Escuela Nueva* (New School) movement—a world-renowned approach to working with multigrade schools in isolated rural areas that has transformed primary education in Colombia and Guatemala. Its components have been applied in many other Latin American countries.

### WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goals of BASE II are to 1) increase Nicaraguan children's access to quality primary education, 2) improve student achievement, and 3) increase the number of students completing primary school. This has been done through a network of 170 “model schools”—the centerpiece of the project—located in two thirds of the municipalities nationwide. Given the proven success of BASE model schools, roughly 2,000 other public primary schools around the country have started to adopt the approach to date, or roughly one third of all Nicaraguan schools.

By the end of the program, it is expected that model school students will have completed more years of schooling and demonstrated greater achievement as a result of active learning. Teachers will also have been equipped to provide quality education

<sup>6</sup> BASE II was originally awarded from March 1999 to September 2003 with a \$12.6 million budget. Two option years (included in the original contract) were authorized to provide the program a bridge between the old USAID strategy and the new 2003–2008 strategy and program.

<sup>7</sup> *Plan Común de Trabajo del MECD en el Marco del SWAP* (MECO Sector-Wide Framework) 2004–2008, first version, February 2004.



Children holding education kits supplied after Hurricane Mitch.

# EDUCATION RECOVERY COMPONENT

## HURRICANE MITCH RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with partners CARE, Don Bosco Youth Center and CECIM<sup>8</sup>

Dates: October 1999 to December 2001

Funding: \$4,387,426<sup>9</sup>

### WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?

Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in October 1998 with a fury experienced in the region only once a century. Extensive destruction resulted in 19,000 people dead or missing. Total damages were estimated at \$8.5 billion for the region, wiping out decades of development progress—particularly in Honduras and Nicaragua. Damages in Nicaragua were estimated at \$1.5 billion, or 70 percent of the 1998 gross domestic product. Nearly 900,000 people—18 percent of the entire population—were seriously affected by the storm.

More than 500 primary schools were damaged or destroyed. Many that survived became temporary shelters for homeless families. Numerous students suffered severe learning, discipline, and emotional problems related to the trauma of the hurricane. This was particularly true in two areas: Posoltega, site of a disastrous volcanic mudslide that buried entire communities and killed thousands of people; and Nueva Vida, a poor urban resettlement area for families displaced by the flooding of

Lake Managua. Many students lost a year of schooling when their families were forced to relocate, while others had to repeat a grade.

### WHAT DID USAID DO TO RESPOND?

U.S. Government support, channeled through 13 different federal agencies, provided \$545.1 million for reconstruction activities in the five countries hit by Hurricane Mitch, plus a Central America regional program. USAID Nicaragua's \$103.6 million hurricane recovery program concentrated on five principal areas: economic reactivation, public health, schools, disaster mitigation, and local government. The geographic emphases were Nicaragua's north and northwestern departments and along the Rio Coco in the remote Atlantic region bordering Honduras. The overall USAID mission goal was to "build back better"—meaning to rebuild infrastructure to better withstand violent weather.

### WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The Education Recovery Component (ERC) was designed to provide assistance in restoring and improving the conditions for learning that existed in

<sup>8</sup> Centro de Educación y Capacitación Integral Hna. Maura Clark (Sister Maura Clark Education and Training Center).

<sup>9</sup> The school reconstruction program was a 24-month activity added to the AED BASE II contract by means of a contract modification under the mission's Hurricane Mitch Recovery Special Objective.

targeted primary schools before Hurricane Mitch.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE INVOLVED?

- Resupplying and delivering school supplies, learning materials, classroom equipment, and sports equipment to primary schools in Mitch-affected areas. Teachers, parents, and community members received training on how most effectively to use and care for the donated materials.
- Schools were refurbished and repaired with newly built wooden furniture for students and teachers, and structural damage to primary schools was repaired, particularly in the remote Río Coco area. Encouraging a community sense of co-ownership and providing short-term employment in recovering communities were important secondary purposes of these activities. Small businesses were hired to build furniture and carry out major repairs, while parents helped with easy-to-assemble furniture and basic repairs.
- Water and sanitation systems were provided, since most schools lacked adequate water and sanitation. The ERC improved basic conditions by constructing new wells and latrines and rehabilitating salvageable facilities. The project also provided school and community training and reference manuals on the maintenance of the installations and basic training in health concepts and practices.

- The ERC provided psychological recovery services to schools in Posoltega and Nueva Vida, two of the most severely affected areas. In Posoltega, this included specialized training for teachers, principals, and supervisors on how to help children, parents, and the teachers and principals themselves recover from the psychological effects and trauma of a major disaster. The Nueva Vida afterschool program offered safe, practical work and learning alternatives for at-risk youth, including vocational training for older participants and wide-ranging activities for children.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

Through the ERC, nearly 28,000 students, 800 teachers, 704 classrooms, and 223 schools and their communities benefited from receiving new educational supplies and classroom equipment. Under the program 5,500 pieces of newly built wooden school furniture—including classroom tables and chairs for children, and desks and chairs for teachers—were constructed with community participation and provided to 69 primary schools. Repairs were made to damaged structures in 20 beneficiary schools, including 16 schools in the Río Coco area. In addition, more than 150 schools benefited from new well and latrine construction, as well as reconstruction of existing facilities. Overall, more than 12,300 students, 456 classrooms, and 365 teachers enjoyed new and improved water and sanitation facilities.

Nearly 140 hours of psychological recovery training were provided for 390 teachers, principals, and local education officials, indirectly benefiting more than 5,300 students. Teachers reported that academic performance and discipline problems improved in classrooms where they had received the training.

More than 200 Nueva Vida students participated in afterschool programs and vocational training courses. Although these youth were at risk from drugs, juvenile prostitution, domestic and street violence, and gang-related criminal activity, fewer than 10 percent dropped out of the program. Other student outcomes included improved reading skills, greater self-esteem, less aggressive behavior, and improved family and peer relationships.

# REGIONAL PROJECTS

## CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING (CETT)

Implemented in Nicaragua by the Ricardo Morales Avilés Normal School  
Dates: September 2003 to September 2008<sup>10</sup>  
Funding: \$8,497,683 (to date)



Nicaragua CETT teacher training session.

### WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Educational achievement indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) compare poorly with the world's other regions. In some LAC countries, fewer than 60 percent of children who start school reach the fifth grade, and illiteracy rates remain high. These educational gaps limit the personal, civic, and economic potential of children and the communities in which they live. On a regional level, the economic competitiveness of Latin America and the Caribbean is severely constrained.

### WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

In view of these regional challenges, President Bush announced a White House initiative at the Summit of the Americas in 2001 to establish three teacher training centers (in Central America and the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and the Andean region of South America) to improve reading instruction in the early primary grades. The Central American and the Dominican Republic (CADR) CETT is led by a consortium of partners in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua. It is estimated that 15,000

teachers and 500,000 students in 1,000 primary schools will have benefited region-wide by 2008.

### WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal of the initiative is to reduce the high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement in the region by improving reading instruction in grades 1–3. CETT activities are intended to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers and administrators in the region and to enrich early classroom instruction so that students gain competence in reading and writing. To address equity concerns, special emphasis is placed on disadvantaged communities and rural areas.

### WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

There are five major CETT Program components 1) teacher training, 2) creation of teaching and learning materials, 3) production of assessment and diagnostic tools, 4) applied research, and 5) information and communication technology. Partner institutions in each country (except Nicaragua) are responsible for developing a specific program component, with materials, methodologies, and best practices shared across the consortium within the Central American and Dominican

<sup>10</sup> Anticipated completion date.

Republic context. The Ricardo Morales Avilés Normal School (ENRMA) in Jinotepe is the Nicaraguan member of the CADR CETT consortium. ENRMA was established more than a century ago as a pre-service and in-service teacher training center. It is considered both an implementer and a beneficiary of the program and has a working agreement with the MECD.

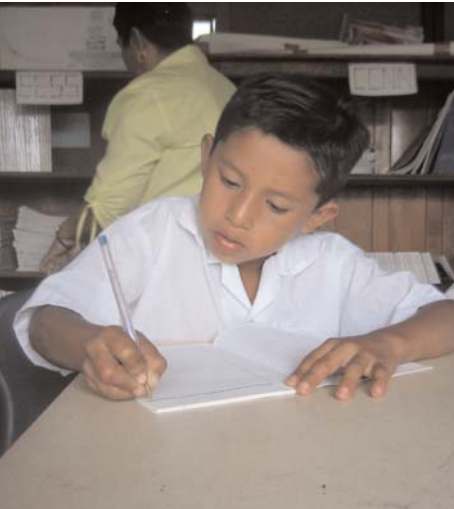
CETT activities are implemented in 360 primary schools, from both urban and rural areas, in seven departments of Nicaragua. An overall goal is to train 2,500 teachers how to apply better practices to improve the reading and comprehension abilities of first through third graders.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN NICARAGUA?

In Nicaragua, the CETT targets were surpassed during the first year of implementation, owing to the high demand for training and an effective allocation of resources. During the early stages of CETT activities in 2004, 98 first grade teachers and four pedagogical advisers from 75 participating schools were trained on applying interactive teaching methodologies to enhance students' reading and comprehension skills. Also during year one, three studies—a baseline study and studies of student preparedness, and reading achievement—were conducted to assess first grade program outcomes. Successive studies will be conducted on second and third grade outcomes in the coming years of program implementation.

Training on monitoring and evaluation has been provided to teachers in 90 schools, and 384 classrooms have been equipped with learning materials and audio equipment. In addition, 362 teacher quality circles have been held to provide feedback about the training process.

To date, 834 in-service teachers, 130 pre-service teachers, 99 school principals, and 68 pedagogical advisers have received training, with 29,190 students benefiting from these activities. Given the program's ability to provide training to teachers at a higher rate than anticipated, the Nicaraguan CETT plans to train 2,500 teachers before the program ends.



**Student in Global Development Alliance (GDA)-supported school works on math activity.**

# GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

## MODEL SCHOOL EXPANSION

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development

Local Partners: American–Nicaraguan Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), American–Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF), Eduquemos, and FISE<sup>11</sup>

Dates: October 2002 to May 2005

Central USAID Funding: \$1,100,000 (matched by local partners)

### WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

In Latin America, as in most countries, there is not a strong tradition of private sector participation in education. Rather, education has typically been the domain of the public sector, supplemented by some investment from private educational and religious institutions. The private sector has great potential to contribute to education by providing valuable financial and in-kind support and by helping influence policies and curricula so that the workforce gains the requisite skills and knowledge to enhance competitiveness. The poor quality of education—a considerable obstacle to economic growth—is a strong incentive for encouraging private sector support.

### WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

In May 2001, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the establishment of the Global Development Alliance (GDA) as a key part of a new business model for USAID. The GDA program is intended to improve education quality worldwide by helping broaden development assistance beyond traditional donors—leveraging resources, alternative approaches, and new technologies through public-private sector alliances.

The GDA is working to improve educational quality through five projects. Two of the projects are global initiatives aimed at furthering the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative through an education Internet portal and a diagnostic tool for measuring country progress toward education goals. The three field-based projects—in Bangladesh, Nicaragua, and Nigeria—address education and entrepreneurship for youth, women's access to quality higher education, and teacher education and community participation. Private sector contributions match USAID funding for the GDA program on at least a one-to-one basis.

### WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal of the Model School Expansion (MSE) partnership in Nicaragua is to promote the classroom and community-support reforms represented by the 170 BASE II model schools in at least 130 other primary schools. The project integrates donations from its private sector partners with model school reforms. Both the American–Nicaraguan Foundation and the American Chamber of Commerce (through its corporate school sponsorship program) supports half of the schools in the GDA program. MSEGDA also uses the global Web

<sup>11</sup> *Fondo de Inversión Social del Estado*, the Nicaraguan government Social Investment Fund.

portal to enhance communication and collaboration among teachers.

The MSEGDA improves the parent participation, student retention, and academic performance that characterize BASE II model schools. By the end of the project, 130 schools—located in 12 departments, 32 municipalities, and one autonomous region—will benefit, reaching 44,595 students, 1,225 teachers, 130 school directors, and 75 departmental and municipal MECD delegates.

### **WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?**

Improved quality of education, enhanced community participation, and integration of private sector donations are accomplished through:

- Training for teachers, school directors, and local MECD staff on the teaching and learning reforms promoted under the BASE II model school program. Training concentrates on student-centered, constructivist teaching methods, active learning (both individually and in small groups), peer learning and tutoring, democratic student government, the use of teacher-developed materials, and other pedagogical reforms.
  - Training school councils on model school interventions and how to make the most effective use of private donations.
- A wide range of support to schools, including textbooks, school equipment, infrastructure repairs, construction, technology centers, a “glass of milk” program, teaching materials, school supplies, and parent-supported libraries in rural areas. Private sector sponsors are also introducing corporate practices such as providing performance-based bonuses to teachers and developing small business projects to help schools become more sustainable.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?**

The MSEGDA program has been introduced in all 130 target schools. Moreover, additional sponsors have enabled the project to reach an extra 21 schools. Sponsors have provided 190 computers, 30 printers, and school furniture benefiting 30 schools in five departments. Math kits have been provided to 126 schools, and 28 new school libraries have been established. More than \$5 million in private donations have been provided to the 130 schools, leveraging resources at more than a 5:1 basis.

Some cash and in-kind resources were obtained from local businesses. ANF donated textbooks, 24 containers of school supplies, and 32 containers of school furniture and delivered 300,000 pounds of milk provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. AMCHAM and ANF helped schools garner support from other donors, such as the Japanese Embassy. Bell South agreed to provide computers and Internet access for two years to 15 USAID-supported schools.

School councils from 48 schools received training in small business entrepreneurship to support their school fund-raising efforts. Also, 110 teachers were trained to use the Global Learning Portal and have access to lesson plans developed by other teachers.

BASE and GDA schools made exchange visits, which helped generate enthusiasm for the reforms and create a shared vision. Many of the GDA schools had already heard of the model schools and were familiar with the positive impact. As a result, the adoption of reforms progressed more quickly than expected.



# PART 3

## IMPACTS, LESSONS, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

### IMPACT OF USAID EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

USAID has made a significant impact on the education sector over the past five years, particularly in the geographic areas where activities are centered. Major achievements and results are summarized below.

#### GREATER ACCESS AND QUALITY IN MODEL SCHOOLS

The proven success of USAID's model school program has led to the Nicaraguan government scaling-up the classroom methodology and community participation reforms nationwide. In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (MECD) began an effort to pilot all current and successful reform interventions (including the BASE II elements) under a single comprehensive program.

The BASE II mid-term evaluators observed significant and positive changes in teaching behavior; classroom organization; teacher attitudes;

student, parent, and community involvement; and the functioning of both regular and multigrade schools. They reported observing more positive change during 1999–2002 than in the entire previous decade.

#### INCREASED PERFORMANCE AND PARENT/COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Across model schools, fourth grade completion rates<sup>12</sup> are considerably higher—by 22 percentage points—than the overall national average of 50.4 percent. In Pacific coast model schools, where there is a longer history of BASE support, fourth grade completion was 73 percent in 2004. This indicator measures the degree to which BASE II activities have increased students' persistence in school, gauges an educational system's internal efficiency, and points to greater learning achievement (assuming that staying in school longer results in increased learning). Students enrolled in model schools usually stay in school longer, and they usually graduate from sixth grade.

<sup>12</sup>The percentage of students successfully completing fourth grade and enrolling in fifth grade.

Parents participating in a school meeting.





**This third grade classroom exemplifies the regular use of a variety of learning materials, cooperative seating arrangements, and interactive learning techniques to improve reading.**

Model school students have shown steady, and in some cases dramatic, increases in mastery of Spanish and mathematics over the three years that achievement tests have been administered. All classrooms tested showed a collective increase in mastery of 31.4 percent in third grade and 28.3 percent in fourth grade.

Parent participation in school activities—reaching 96 percent in urban schools and 93 percent in rural schools in 2003—is one of the most dramatic successes of the BASE II project, particularly in a cultural context where active parent/community involvement in school life is not characteristic. The value of participation in support of school quality is well established. When parents are present at school and directly involved in their children's education, learning improves, classrooms become livelier, schools become safer, enrollment and attendance increase, and children stay in school longer.

While the initial 170 model schools were chosen to participate in the program, several hundred neighboring schools have voluntarily adopted the reform elements on their own. This reflects a high level of enthusiasm on the part of teachers and principals to be part of a genuine transformation of the Nicaraguan primary school system.

## **LESSONS LEARNED/ BEST PRACTICES**

**1.** **Changes in teacher's attitudes and behaviors take time to realize.** The model school approach requires a paradigm shift,

since teachers must change their professional self-perceptions from those of traditional lecturers and disciplinarians to "classroom learning managers" and local leaders in a community-based education reform movement. The change, once achieved, is dramatic. Teachers become active, empowered managers of the new methodologies and transmit their motivation, enthusiasm, and creativity to students and parents. However, this process does not happen overnight, nor is it predictable. While in some cases the evolution occurs within a few months, it can take more than a year in other cases. Change cannot be forced; teachers must change their attitudes willingly.

**2.** **To ensure sustainability, especially when attitude changes are involved, buy-in must occur at all levels of the Ministry hierarchy.** A deliberate strategy must involve individuals at all positions of the MECD hierarchy—teachers, school directors, municipal and departmental technicians and delegates, and central MECD officials—in materials development and cross-training activities. The result is a web of individuals at all levels who have taken ownership and are committed to the model school approach.

**3.** **Addressing unanticipated crises, while simultaneously implementing regular project activities, can be a great challenge.** No one could have foreseen that Hurricane Mitch would devastate large portions of Nicaragua in October 1998. But because it did, the initiation of BASE II activities in 1999 took place concurrently with the design of the hurricane reconstruction program. Both programs were implemented in 2000–2001. To its credit, the BASE II implementing partner

quickly assumed responsibility for implementing the important reconstruction program under extremely demanding conditions. However, the human resource capacity of USAID and BASE II was stretched to the maximum, adversely affecting some aspects of the education development program.

**4.** **There are many benefits to building on past accomplishments.** Under BASE II, staff built on the groundwork laid by the predecessor project (BASE) and other donor-financed education projects from the 1990s.

**5.** **There is great value in continuity.** BASE II activities and Ministry reforms have both advanced with the least difficulty when there has been stability among implementing partner and MECD staff. In the case of the model schools, the continuity within the MECD has been primarily at the grassroots and among middle level Ministry staff. Frequent changes at senior levels in the MECD during 1999–2002 had an adverse effect on the pace of progress and implementation of activities.

**6.** **Working in a region that is geographically separated from the rest of the country—and that has different languages, culture, and political objectives—requires a strategy tailored to that region.** Bilingual education activities oriented toward the Atlantic coast were introduced under BASE II with the idea that (except for introducing bilingual intercultural education) the educational approach would be the same used in other regions. It would have been preferable to adopt from the beginning an approach that addressed the specific realities of the Atlantic coast region.

**7.** **A cost-effective expansion of the model can be carried out, when low-cost instructional materials have been developed, teacher manuals and student guides have been written, and new textbooks made available.** Decentralized teacher quality circles—which function as a genuine teachers-training-teachers model—allow teachers to regularly discuss their daily experiences, compare classroom challenges, and benefit from collective learning and problem solving. Active parent and community participation is also a key input.

**8.** **The emphasis in BASE II on democratic institutions helped strengthen classroom learning and promote the spirit and practice of democracy in the schools that the project served.** Democratic community participation in support of school quality has become a distinguishing feature of primary education reform in Nicaragua. Student government is also important for democracy building and for strengthening classroom teaching and learning.

**9.** **Phonetic decoding, or the ability to sound out words, does not necessarily ensure reading comprehension.** It is critical that students gain literacy and reading comprehension skills in the first three grades, since all other learning (including solving math problems) depends on this ability. Without a strong foundation of learning and teaching in grades 1–3, as emphasized in the Centers of Excellence for Teaching Training program, effective achievement in later grades is much more difficult.

**10.** **One-time or single interventions, implemented in isolation, are not effective.** Teachers cannot be expected to apply



**Grade 2 students learning through audio-visual technology.**

new methodologies, at least in the short term, without targeted support and a network of practical assistance. To promote sustainable change, various reform interventions must be conceived holistically, as part of a larger integrated model.

**11. Public-private alliances allow for greater opportunity and growth.** The

Global Development Alliance program has helped develop an agenda for public-private alliances that will now include corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and business ethics in a program that will benefit not only Nicaragua's education sector but also the broader social investment sector (health, education, social security, and family welfare).

**12. Natural disaster relief efforts demand huge investments and require expertise beyond traditional technical assistance.** The Hurricane Mitch program led the Mission to incorporate a construction and rehabilitation component to the standing bilateral education contract. Construction programs generate high demands and investments for extensive quality assurance and control efforts and require expertise require specialized expertise in construction and infrastructure rehabilitation.

**EDUCATION SECTOR PROSPECTS IN NICARAGUA**

Upon taking office in January 2002, President Enrique Bolaños declared education and health top priorities for his administration. He named a strong

senior team to the MECD, including an exceptionally qualified Minister of Education who has provided great impetus to strengthening the MECD and enacting needed reforms. Early on, the Minister and his technical team identified strategic priorities for improving performance and management in the sector, under an initiative called *Educación para la Vida* (Education for Life):

- Promote transformation for life
- Diversify options and lateral alternatives within the system
- Improve educational quality
- Concentrate on priority coverage to the poor
- Expand adult education
- Improve teacher quality and working conditions
- Integrate families, civil society, and the private sector into education
- Improve MECD governance and organization
- Strengthen processes, logistics, and equipment
- Foster interinstitutional coordination

Following the Nicaraguan government's lead to establish sectoral councils that address key areas of its National Development Plan, the MECD in 2003 invited donor representatives to join forces behind a sector-wide approach to education. Programmatically, the sector-wide approach is leading to more effective prioritization and coordination among donor agencies. Under the proactive leadership of the MECD, a common work plan (2004–2008) has been developed that unites all

donor activities under a single framework. This level of coordination and consensus is unprecedented in the sector and bodes well for collective impact.

School decentralization is mandated by the 2002 Educational Participation Law, which formalized the MECD's long-standing School Autonomy Program. Local involvement in school administration and education quality improvement is part of Nicaragua's overall strategy for decentralization of public services. USAID is contributing to effective implementation of the law, known as "municipalization," by fully incorporating municipal MECD technical personnel into BASE II classroom and community reform processes and empowering them as key agents for decentralized education reform.

To avoid "reinventing the wheel," a key principle in MECD's planning of its reform initiative has been to identify successful existing interventions, take the best elements of each, and combine them under one new comprehensive model. The resulting program—*Centros de Aprendizaje y Progreso*, or Centers of Learning and Progress (CAP)—is premised on the idea that schools should be developed as centers of health/nutrition, ecology/environment, democracy, innovation, prevention of violence, and recreation.

In addition to the BASE II classroom quality and community participation reforms, the initiative includes infrastructure improvements, stay-in-school family scholarships, and a strengthened school feeding program. The MECD chose 61 schools to pilot the CAPs program in 2004, with another 200

targeted for 2005. Over time, it is expected that all primary schools in the country will eventually become CAPs.

The MECD's proposed reform plan concentrates on three policies: 1) structural transformation in relevance, flexibility, competencies, and diversity, 2) expansion and diversification of educational supply and stimulus of demand, and 3) transformation of governance, democratization, and efficiency. The underlying approach is to make the education system flexible enough to allow citizens to gain core competencies through a variety of paths (e.g., formal, nonformal, distance education), depending on their preference and ability.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR USAID/NICARAGUA

The current combination of political will and strong technical capacity within the MECD represents an exceptional confluence of circumstances and an invaluable opportunity for USAID to help improve all levels of the education system.

Because gains in these areas are still fragile and vulnerable to rollbacks, it is necessary to strengthen and extend achievements in the social sector for greater national impact. Thus, over the next five years, USAID will support the MECD in leading the nationwide expansion of community participation and the active teaching and learning approach through CAPs. USAID also will continue to emphasize improving access and quality in the public and primary education system.

**Third grade student in CETT-supported school demonstrating knowledge using a teacher-made map.**



Nicaragua is challenged to substantially increase investments in basic education and to better manage those investments. The country's recently approved debt relief<sup>13</sup> offers an ideal opportunity to make the systemic improvements needed to transform social sector services and increase transparency. USAID's development of effective partnerships with the government of Nicaragua, other donors, and the public and private sectors will promote "Education for All" in a way that will center on improving the quality of primary education nationwide—fostering the development of an educated, productive, and competitive society.

School decentralization and autonomy are hallmarks of contemporary school reform efforts in Latin America. USAID will continue to help the MECD decentralize education through the training of teachers and supervisors and by strengthening parent and community participation in schools. USAID

will encourage greater public and private investment in education to increase access to quality education and support policies that promote greater equity.

Through 2008, program performance will be measured at the Strategic Objective level through four common regional indicators. Preliminarily, USAID anticipates Nicaraguan government progress in the following areas under its current Country Strategy:

- An increase in primary education completion rates.
- An improvement in net enrollment rates for grades 7–9.
- An increase in public expenditures on primary education as a percentage of gross domestic product.
- A transformation of the national curriculum to one based in competencies for life, work, and social interactions.

<sup>13</sup> Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, Nicaragua obtained debt relief in January 2004 that will amount to approximately \$4.5 billion over time. As outlined in Nicaragua's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, these resources will be used to fund a set of social and structural reforms designed to promote human capital development and social protection, especially through better education and health.





# SUGGESTED READING

For more on the BASE II Project, see the following reports and Web sites:

- *BASE II Midterm Evaluation Report* (Bernbaum, Marcia, and Richard Kraft. 2002. Contact USAID/Nicaragua mission for a copy).
- *"Esfuerzos para mejorar la Educación Básica en Centroamérica, 2003. Serie Mejores Prácticas. Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Ameritas series, No. 14.* Available at [www.preal.cl/docs-mejprac/NI14.pdf](http://www.preal.cl/docs-mejprac/NI14.pdf).
- BASE Project home page (in Spanish) ([www.aed.org.ni](http://www.aed.org.ni)).
- CEDOCVirtual.htm (BASE II Virtual Documentation Center in Spanish ([www.glpnet.org/glpnet/en/our\\_world/nicaragua/basel/](http://www.glpnet.org/glpnet/en/our_world/nicaragua/basel/))).
- BASE II success story ([www.usaid.org/ni/pdf/stories/2002/november1\\_02.pdf](http://www.usaid.org/ni/pdf/stories/2002/november1_02.pdf)).
- *The Effects of Active Learning Programs in Multigrade Schools on Girls' Persistence in and Completion of Primary School in Developing Countries* (Available at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PNACS291.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACS291.pdf)).

For more on the Education Recovery Component, see the following report and Web site:

- *Closeout Report: USAID/Nicaragua Special Objective-Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Program* (Academy for Educational Development. 2002. Available at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PDABW567.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABW567.pdf)).

For more on the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training, see the following Web sites:

- [www.readingforallchildren.org](http://www.readingforallchildren.org).
- CETT fact sheet in Spanish ([www.usaid.gov/espanol/pr03081\\_sp.html](http://www.usaid.gov/espanol/pr03081_sp.html)).

For more on the Global Development Alliance, see the following reports and Web sites:

- Global Learning Portal ([www.glpnet.org](http://www.glpnet.org)).
- Visit to a Model School (Case study in Spanish [http://eportall-ssdc.aed.org/glpnet/library/docs/libcs\\_ni\\_es.pdf](http://eportall-ssdc.aed.org/glpnet/library/docs/libcs_ni_es.pdf)).
- Global Development Alliance Bulletin ([www.infogroup.com.ni/aed](http://www.infogroup.com.ni/aed) in Spanish).

For more on USAID projects and the education sector in Nicaragua, see the following reports and Web sites:

- Home page of Nicaraguan Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports ([www.mecd.gob.ni/default.htm](http://www.mecd.gob.ni/default.htm)).
- Updated information on Ministry of Education, Culture, and sports plans to shift to a competency-based education system ([www.mecd.gob.ni/simposio.asp](http://www.mecd.gob.ni/simposio.asp)).
- USAID/Nicaragua FY2005 congressional Budget Justification ([www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/ni.html](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/ni.html)).
- USAID/Nicaragua home page ([www.usaid.gov.ni](http://www.usaid.gov.ni)).



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