Reading on the Frontlines: The Case of Nicaragua

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About the Presentation

- This presentation was prepared for the 57th Annual Comparative and International Education Society, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA March 10, 2013.

- The USAID EdData II project is led by RTI International, Contract No. EHC-E-00-04-00004-00. Additional funding was contributed by RTI International.

- The presentation was developed by Amber Gove, RTI International, as part of the panel: “Making Learning Stick: Systemic Factors that Constrain (or Promote) Learning Achievement at Scale.” Contributions were provided by Dr. Vanessa Castro and Jessica Mejia.

- All opinions are my own.
Outline

• EdData II Task Order 5: Promoting Quality Education in Nicaragua
  – Objectives
  – Activities
  – Accomplishments
• Status Update
  – Ministry
  – Civil Society
• Reflections on factors affecting scale-up

Nicaragua Project Objectives

1. Assess the extent to which early-grade primary school children in different school settings learn to read with an acceptable degree of comprehension and at an acceptable rate of fluency; and

2. Raise the visibility of education quality, the importance of standards, and USAID basic education programming.
   – The Center for Education Research and Social Action (CIASES) and Carlos Cuadra Cardenal Publicidad, SA (CCCP) partnered with RTI as subcontractors.
Nicaragua Project Activities

- Improve awareness and quality of early reading development through:
  - Development of an early grade reading assessment in collaboration with the ministry
  - Dissemination of results, policy dialogue activities
- Support capacity development and sustainability through:
  - Training of trainer workshops (for teacher educators and ministry municipal leaders)
  - Policy dialogue activities
  - Production and distribution of videos: Social mobilization and teacher professional development

Nicaragua Project Accomplishments

- National EGRA (Diagnóstico de Lectura Inicial [DLI])
  - 126 schools, 6649 students
  - Developed capacity of local NGO, Ministry of Education interest
  - Follow-on to World Bank-funded assessment in Atlantic Coast, in Spanish and Miskito
  - Math
- Teacher Trainer Workshops
  - 4 workshops at Escuelas Normales
  - 230 participants
  - Ongoing use of videos and materials
- Unexpected:
  - Termination of evaluation aspect, no follow-on data collection
  - Robust civil society campaign
Status Update: Ministry

- **Sustainability? Yes**
  - Annual, national Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA):
    15k students
  - Reading a priority of the government, regular national campaigns (Marti to Fidel, Save the First Grade)

- **Technical Capacity? Mixed**
  - Using same assessment from 2008
  - Sample very large, difficult to process
  - Teacher-administered for external monitoring/high stakes? (incentives?)
  - Students not randomly selected

Status Update: Civil Society

- **Objectives:**
  - Elevate the status of the teaching profession
  - Stimulate society to improve grade 1 reading
  - Put reading and comprehension at the center of the education dialogue
  - Foster awareness, in particular in households, to motivate children to read
Status Update: Civil Society

• Campaign in its 4\textsuperscript{th} year
• Annual revenue ~25k
• 23 civil society orgs, many new to supporting reading
• 93→154→200 schools

Reflecting on factors

• The L factor?
• Politics not policy
  – Mistrust of donors
  – Shortage of donor engagement
• Design to get it done or design to have it sustained?
  – Conflict between short-term project objectives and long-term system improvement
• Local NGO key to ongoing engagement, support, sustainability
  – Unexpected benefit—CIASES development and collaboration in improving EGRA data collection and administration