Improving Literacy Instruction
Lessons Learned from Latin America

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2011 Global Education Workshop: From Evidence to Action
Purpose of Session

- **Share lessons learned** from Agency’s first regional literacy initiative and follow on programs
  - Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) (2002-2009)
  - Experience from the **Dominican Republic** in incorporating and expanding CETT after the end of regional funding in 2009
- Inform others grappling with similar issues as they implement goal one of the new education strategy
Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT)

Created to **improve the pedagogical skills of teachers** in the first, second, and third grades in economically disadvantaged communities of Latin America and the Caribbean.
35,095 teachers and administrators received training in interactive methods of literacy instruction.

The program reached over 799,000 students in twenty-one countries.

Teachers made significant changes in their performance in the classroom and adopted new teaching techniques.

CETT students in all three CETTs statistically significantly improved their reading test scores over the course of the school year.

Participants and stakeholders have new paradigm for teacher training and literacy instruction.
How did we achieve this?

Local partners: three CETT consortia of local implementers:

- **C-CETT** (Caribbean)
- **Centro Andino** (South America)
- **CETT CA-RD** (Central America and the Dominican Republic)
CETT Components

- **Teacher training** in effective reading methodologies and classroom management techniques
- **Teaching and learning materials** for teachers to use to improve reading instruction
- **Diagnostic tools** to enable teachers to identify and address students’ weaknesses and needs
- **Applied research** to ensure the efficacy of the training, tools, and materials provided
- **Information and communications technologies (ICTs)** to broaden access to the program
- Additionally, CETTs focused on **sustainability efforts** to ensure continuance of the program after the end of USAID funding.
Designing CETT Training

Focus on evidence

Concepts and techniques used to were based on research in international best practices (teacher training and literacy instruction).

Creating the CETT Model for Teacher Training

In designing the CETT teacher training model, USAID or local implementing institutions had to consider several key questions:

- How should the teachers be trained? How should the trainers be trained?
- What are the best practices in reading instruction for improved literacy in LAC?
- How do we adopt theories of the child-friendly classroom?
CETT Training

Training Content
CETT training *content* was related to seven literacy skills: reading comprehension, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, oral expression, written expression, and vocabulary.

In addition teacher training focused on classroom management.

Training Techniques
CETT introduced innovative *techniques*, including:

- Continuous teacher training throughout the school year
  - Both face-to-face training and distance learning models were created
- Follow-up support in the classroom
  - Modeling and teacher observations
- Teacher circles to share teacher experiences with peers
- Emphasis on the role of parents and the greater community in embracing a “culture of literacy” to support the importance of reading in the early grades
Lessons Learned

- Changing the paradigm
- Program design
- Monitoring achievement
- Sustainability
Changing the paradigm: The “so what” factor!

In order to change the way literacy instruction was taught, stakeholders first had to change their way of thinking.

- All stakeholders noted an immense change in their perception of the **importance of teaching reading and writing in early grades**
- Teachers, principals, and parents had a new understanding of the **importance of their role** in helping students learn to read and write
- CETT staff, trainers, and teachers noted the **importance of principals’ support** in effecting change

*My schools will never go back. The changes are within them. The love for their profession is in them. Maybe some percentage will, but most of them will never be the same.*
• Program implementers should plan and implement interventions of sufficient duration to ensure that changes have adequate time to take hold.
  
  o Differences in classroom (student) outcomes as a result of CETT took time. Only in the last years of CETT were changes in literacy instruction significantly related to improvements in student performance.

• It is important to consider all components of the intervention and how they complement each other.
  
  o In CETT the teacher training model worked best as a package that incorporated face-to-face training, follow-up in the classroom, materials, etc.
Measuring Achievement

• Measuring student progress is a complex process that requires substantial time. Item development, modelling, sampling and the analysis plan must be considered.

• Evaluation plans need to specify how achievement will be measured and the procedures that will be followed.

• Sufficient sample sizes are needed to have credible and reliable conclusions about program impact – which impacts budgeting and resources.

• CETT faced a challenge in aligning the regional student assessment efforts with country cultural and education system differences as well as variations in implementation.
Sustainability

• **Political sustainability:** Implementing partners that had a strong relationship with the MOE better withstood political turnovers and were more likely to maintain relationships across the political spectrum.

• **Financial sustainability:** Public-private partnerships were successful when both partners benefited from the program.

• **Institutional sustainability:** Implementing institutions sustained CETT operations by becoming experts in teacher training and literacy.

• **Social sustainability:** The CETTs had an important influence in how key stakeholders understand the importance of early grade reading, the “culture of literacy.”

• Sustainability efforts should be diversified across the four types of sustainability (political, financial, institutional, social). Relying too much on a single type of sustainability puts the program at risk.
Experience in the Dominican Republic

Student Achievement
• DR ranked last in math, reading, and science out of 16 participating countries in the 2008 Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE)

System Quality
• According to the World Economic Forum, the DR ranks 137th in education quality and 134th in investment of public funds out of 139 countries surveyed

Public Involvement
• Public investment in education is around 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), much less than the 4 percent GDP investment mandated by the Dominican education law

Overage Enrollment and Overcrowding
• While access to schooling has grown in recent years, with gross enrollment rates in the primary grades at or near 100 percent, net enrollment rates are still well below expectations
• Over-crowding in schools has led to many schools resorting to two or three sessions per day to meet the demand. This has resulted in an average school day of two hours forty minutes
CETT ➔ TEF ➔ PEF

Reading

Math

TEF

CETT

TEF

1st – 3rd Grades

4th Grade

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<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tr>
<td>• PUCMM</td>
<td>• Capacity</td>
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Results and Impact
4th Grade Performance on Math Evaluation 5/2010

Control
- <40%: 7%
- 40-50%: 31%
- >50%: 62%

1 Year
- <40%: 16%
- 40-50%: 52%
- >50%: 32%

2 Years
- <40%: 20%
- 40-50%: 28%
- >50%: 52%

3 Years
- <40%: 23%
- 40-50%: 15%
- >50%: 62%

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PEF Reading Assessment 2010

4th Control

- <40%: 61%
- 40-50%: 30%
- >50%: 9%

4th 1 year

- <40%: 31%
- 40-50%: 50%
- >50%: 19%
1. Regional Nature
   - Was the regional design valuable in creating training practices and content that are superior to what individual countries might have done on their own?

2. Testing and Assessment
   - Was the testing initiative successful in building regional testing capacity and assessments that accurately show outcomes resulting from CETT?

3. Sustainability
   - What lessons learned have emerged with regard to sustaining or scaling up CETT and its various components?

4. Paradigm Shift
   - In what ways did CETT contribute to changes in behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of various stakeholder groups: teachers, students, directors, and parents?

5. Cost Effectiveness Analysis
   - What were the costs and benefits of the CETT program? What components of the CETT teacher training model were most effective?
THANK YOU!

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