

The Ingredients of a Public-Private Partnership in Education:

The Global Development Alliance Model School
Expansion Project in Nicaragua

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List of Acronyms

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AMANCO	Tubofort Industrial de Nicaragua S,A.
AMCHAM	American Chamber of Commerce in Nicaragua
ANF	American-Nicaraguan Foundation
BASE	Basic Education Project in Nicaragua
BATCA	British American Tobacco
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FISE	Fondo de Inversión Social de Emergencia
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GEOSA	Generadora Eléctrica Occidental
MECD	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports
MSE	Model School Expansion
Telcor	Instituto Nicaragüense de Telecomunicaciones y Correo
UCA	Universidad Centro-América
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Global Development Alliance (GDA) Background

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 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The GDA initiative aims to launch best practices in public-private partnerships around the world. The model is designed to encourage economic growth, develop businesses and workforces, address health and environmental problems, and expand access to education and technology. GDA accomplishes its goals by broadening development assistance beyond traditional international donor agencies by leveraging resources, alternative approaches, and new technologies available through public-private alliances. These initiatives aim to multiply the overall impact by mobilizing the ideas, efforts, and resources of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, foundations, and private businesses to assist those in greatest need all over the world.

In response to the dire need to support education in Nicaragua, the Global Development Alliance/Public Private Alliances in Education Program was launched in October 2002 through a cooperative agreement with the Academy for Educational Development (AED). USAID committed \$1.1 million in funds to support the Model School program while two local organizations, the American Chamber of Commerce of Nicaragua (AMCHAM) and the American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF), committed at least \$1.3 million for school improvements. Exceeding initial expectations three years later, the project successfully leveraged more than \$6 million for education.

The primary objective of GDA Nicaragua was to extend the educational reforms of the USAID-funded Basic Education Project in Nicaragua (BASE) in partnership with the private sector through

“This project has situated itself as one of the most modern education initiatives in the world.”

— **Juan Bautista Arrien**
Delegate Representative,
UNESCO-Nicaragua

“We sponsor the school because it is the Corporate Social Responsibility of our company. Without the application of this concept, we would not be a company. This program should be taken up by other companies.”

— Representative of AMANCO, sponsor of Escuela Batahola Sur

the Model School Expansion project (GDA/MSE). AED also strove to integrate the donations and contributions of the private sector into the Model School reform to enhance the overall impact of partner activities.

In designing GDA/MSE, AED decided to link its educational goals with those of AMCHAM and ANF, two local organizations with education projects already in place. Throughout the project, various actors took on new and exciting roles, helping the project expand and reach an unprecedented number of school communities outside the initial Model School network. In fact, the GDA project went beyond its initial goal of supporting 130 schools and grew to 171 schools. The schools demonstrated improvement in a short time with an overall 3% increase in student retention and an average 4.25% increase in test scores. With the backbone of USAID support, many private-sector companies expanded their support, newly confident that their donations would positively impact education. As a result, GDA successfully harnessed the participation of more than 50 private-sector sponsors who supported the project goals in diverse ways.

The synergy enabled by this alliance propelled the education initiatives to new and exciting heights in Nicaragua. The GDA/MSE project has distinguished itself as a true success story for public-private partnerships in education. This publication outlines the primary ingredients for creating this successful public-private partnership in education and provides a snapshot of how the program affected participating school communities and sponsors.

Public-Private Alliances in Education

While education policy is generally perceived as the responsibility of governments, lack of financial and managerial capacity often hinders a government’s ability to meet the obligations of national education systems. Public-private partnerships—alliances with education stakeholders such as private businesses, the media, and non-governmental organizations—can complement government efforts and make meaningful improvements in education.

Private businesses have tremendous potential to bring their collective voice, influence, and access to decision makers to call attention to the importance of education. Businesses bring entrepreneurial skills and expertise to help address difficult challenges by using their financial and material resources to bridge critical gaps and catalyze change. In addition, public-private alliances offer a plethora of benefits for the private sector, which can best be understood within the general context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Within this

business paradigm, education is viewed as a long-term investment that enhances the prosperity of business activities (better economic and social environment), provides increased visibility for a company (heightened confidence in a company leads to increased sales of goods and services), as well as the company's own competitiveness (better-trained employees are more productive).

Currently, there is growing recognition within the Nicaraguan private sector that economic growth is linked to addressing serious development problems such as the poor quality of education. Private-sector leaders are now identifying the need to become more involved in addressing this challenge, and their active participation in the GDA/MSE project proves that there is increased interest in incorporating CSR into their strategic business plans to improve the quality of education in Nicaragua.



Students receiving donated materials

“The school profits from being the beneficiary. Also, we [school sponsors] are enriched as members of society, as people. We, as citizens, I believe, have to be sensitive. One lives in the context of society. One has to live and help society's problems. This is my relation with the school. It is an opportunity.”

— **Agustin Fuente**
manager of Esso Standard Oil

The Ingredients of a Partnership

The GDA Nicaragua Model

Similar to following a recipe for making bread, the GDA-Nicaragua model would not function without the full participation of all partners—the key ingredients of the alliance. Functioning as multi-layered partnerships, the project’s distinct members assume different roles in support of one another. The school community, like flour, is the first essential ingredient for improving the school’s own development. The teachers receive training and modify their own methodologies while the parents begin actively participating in school activities, and student government councils take on mini-projects to improve their schools. Next, the GDA program staff and facilitators, like the butter, are carefully added to the mix to provide the teachers with the tools to improve their pedagogy and to mobilize the communities. The private sector is the final essential ingredient for the recipe. As the yeast of the recipe, the private sector helps the program rise to new heights. Partners can participate in a variety of ways with the idea that their contributions will further enhance the primary Model School ingredients. As the GDA/MSE project has evolved, the private sector has added its own new ingredients—spices and flavors—to the mix, making the final product more integrated and the impact on the school community even greater.

Ingredient 1: Spreading Model School Reform

Spread by a dedicated and united team of GDA facilitators, Model School reform stems from the active schools methodology that has been adapted from the highly successful *Escuela Nueva* program in Colombia and was first introduced to Nicaragua through the long-running Basic Education Project (BASE). Recognizing the shorter timeframe for the GDA project, the staff focused on the following three major components of the constructivist pedagogy:

■ **Community/Parental Participation**

Studies have shown that when parents are directly involved in their children's education, classrooms become livelier, and enrollment and attendance increase. Recognizing the value of community participation, each GDA school has an active school council, and parents are encouraged to participate in many ways, including managing donations, participating in school activities, and creating learning materials. Teachers also help children connect their studies to daily life, understanding that the community can contribute to the learning process.

■ **Student Governments**

Democracy, civic responsibility, and working with peers are emphasized through the establishment of active, inclusive student councils in each school. Specific activities and responsibilities vary from school to school and might include keeping up the school grounds, planning school activities, conducting fundraising projects, and assisting teachers in school management. Active student participation in all aspects of school life and governance is paramount to Model School reform.

■ **Classroom Learning**

This component includes the bulk of the Model School constructivist methodology: encouraging small-group work, fostering active student participation, using a curriculum that accommodates each student's learning style and pace, promoting students' self-managed study through the use of learning guides, teaching teachers to develop their own supplementary instructional materials, and re-training teachers as classroom learning managers.

The Right Mix of Ingredients: Escuela Waspán Sur, Managua, Nicaragua

Over the past five years, the sponsor British American Tobacco (BATCA) helped the growing Escuela Waspán Sur, located in one of the poorest barrios of Managua, build new classrooms, repair existing structures, install latrines, and construct a protective wall around the school building. From 2003 to 2005, during the GDA/MSE project, student enrollment rates increased by nearly 6% as community members witnessed their school improve and gained confidence that their children would receive a quality education. Recognizing that their combined efforts could make an even larger impact, the director and parents mobilized and implemented their own mini-projects alongside the construction. They planted a garden and painted murals on the school walls representing the Miskito cultural background. The director

also organized carpentry and sewing workshops for the students. In one project, students and parents now work together to build chairs and tables for group work in the classroom, one of the principle pedagogical Model School reforms. They also sew school uniforms hereby enabling more students to attend school. In addition to instilling sustainability into the project interventions, these actions show how the Waspán Sur community took ownership of the project and fully understood the new methodologies of the Model School reform. This Managua school is a vibrant example of how the combination of private sector support and the project-supported classroom methodologies can bring about sustainable improvements. Without both elements, the results might not have been so promising.

The goal was to spread these three essential elements to each school within the GDA network and whenever possible have private-sector sponsors support or add components within their individual schools. For example, both AMCHAM and ANF helped create libraries in many schools, adding one of the missing Model School components.

Ingredient 2: Participation of School Communities

The GDA/MSE project provided many avenues for the community to take ownership of the educational initiatives, a move that ultimately fosters greater sustainability. As a principal component of the Model Schools, school councils were strengthened in all schools to allow parents to take more ownership of the reforms, assess the schools' needs, and become active agents in furthering their own children's development.

The project also encouraged school communities to take on other school improvement projects outside the umbrella of the GDA/MSE program. Often a donation of materials or supplies by a private-sector partner catalyzed community members to organize, build, or collaborate on school improvement projects. These infrastructure improvements further encouraged school directors to design mini-projects and improve buildings with community help. For example, the ANF donation of milk propelled parents to help in school cafeterias.

**Teachers
creating
learning
materials >>**



Ingredient 3: Contributions of the Private Sector

The GDA/MSE project supported a total of 54 private-sector partners under two main alliances, AMCHAM and ANF. Private-sector sponsors represented a variety of national and multinational private businesses, corporate foundations, non-governmental organizations, and individual donors. The variety of partners, all bringing unique ideas to the project, allowed the project to explore a wide range of public-private partnerships in support of education.

American Chamber of Commerce in Nicaragua

Over the last five years, the American Chamber of Commerce in Nicaragua (AMCHAM) has coordinated the *Programa Apadrinamiento/Amadrinamiento de las Escuelas* (School Sponsorship Program), which engages companies to adopt a school, essentially becoming a “godparent” for the school. Under the GDA project, AED complemented the existing School Sponsorship Program with the Model School reform so that each participating school received training from GDA facilitators, while sponsors' collaboration varied from school to school depending on the company's commitment level and individual schools' needs.

In many cases, the sponsors' support evolved over time, and the collaboration changed from material and financial assistance to more of a focus on quality. AMCHAM sponsors came to realize that while cash and in-kind donations such as supplies, infrastructure projects,

“We used to be focused on donations, materials, and infrastructure. Through this project, we've come to realize the importance of focusing on quality.”

— Ana Lovo de Callejas
Fundación Pantaleón

AMCHAM – Nicaragua: History of the Programa de Apadrinamiento Escolar

According to Lorena Zamora, architect and coordinator of the AMCHAM Education Committee, personal experience inspired her to form the committee. On her way to a legislative committee meeting in Managua one day, Lorena was struck when a child street vendor jumped into the back of her vehicle at a traffic light. When she looked at the child's face she began to reflect, “Today this boy is a child. Tomorrow he will be a delinquent and may attack me. This is his school, his reality, his values.” The boy served as a visual reminder of the vicious cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity to receive a quality education in Nicaragua.

Taking this experience to heart, Lorena saw the immediate need to confront the problems of the Nicaraguan education system, including poor academic achievement and poor administrative and infrastructure

order. Her vision was two-pronged: She saw that the private sector could help improve education in order to raise the quality of life of these children and enhance their self-sufficiency. She also believed that by better preparing students for technical and professional careers the private sector could help produce a more productive and efficient labor force as well as attract the business of multinational companies in Nicaragua.

Thus, the AMCHAM Education Committee was created in 1999 by a diverse group of representatives of businesses, government and non-governmental agencies, and organizations. The Committee launched the School Sponsorship Program in 2000 allowing 45 members of the private sector to work one-on-one with a local school in an “adopt-a-school” fashion. Working in close coordination with the MECD in order to reach the schools

and books are important, long-term change comes from improving the quality of education and from the synergy of ideas and participation from all the partners.

AMCHAM sponsors supported schools in the following ways:

Non-traditional support

- **Ideas and Innovation** — Sponsors often shared their corporate practices, entrepreneurial know-how, and strategic thinking with school communities.
- **Advocacy** — Many sponsors also provided ongoing administrative assistance or advocacy. They helped the schools obtain land titles or *Fondo de Inversión Social de Emergencia de Nicaragua* (FISE) funding. In many ways this category is where the project term *padrino* originated, implying a deeper parental type of relationship. The sponsors also helped focus more attention on education issues at the local, regional, and national levels.
- **Bringing in More Players** — Sponsors became also instrumental in promoting the program within their business circles, ultimately garnering more support from outside actors and increasing the total number of sponsors participating in the program.
- **Building Relevant Skills** — The sponsors supported innovative activities such as the school businesses and school garden projects, which helped students to gain relevant livelihood skills.

“Through the constant visits to the classrooms and my participation in the different trainings, I have learned a lot about education. Sometimes I consider myself a part of the process.”

— Ana Lovo de Callejas
Fundación Pantaleón,
sponsor of six schools in
Chinandega



most in need, AMCHAM attracted sponsors far and wide to participate in the program, from multinationals to local private businesses.

Lorena Zamora and School Sponsorship Program participants all agree that the need to improve education in Nicaragua is urgent. Lorena reminds us that “the children and education could not wait.”

<< Lorena Zamora and Juan Bautista Arrien in a GDA/MSE working session for the private sector

- **Pedagogical Assistance** — As the program evolved, more sponsors collaborated directly on pedagogical improvements such as supporting the facilitator's training sessions or implementing other educational projects, such as school businesses or computer classes.

Traditional support

- **Food and Health** — Recognizing the relationship between health and education, some sponsors gave donations to enhance schools' food and health programs. The donation and transportation of milk for school children is an example of this type of collaboration.
- **Performance-Based Incentives** — Sponsors provided incentives or rewards for teachers based upon performance.
- **Resources** — Sponsors donated chairs, desks, books, computers, and other essential school supplies.
- **Physical Development** — Many sponsors gave donations, either monetary or in volunteer time, which helped improve the physical appearance of the school. This included the construction of new classrooms or latrines, as well as other infrastructure improvements and building repairs.

The GDA project helped AMCHAM sponsors maximize their impact on the schools. Through GDA, many sponsors learned to focus their

**Milk distribution
program in
ANF school >>**



support on enhancing the quality of education. AMCHAM grew by adding different activities, including a “cyber-school” computer classroom activity and a school garden project. The AMCHAM alliance also brought increased access to other opportunities and players. Overall approximately \$330,000 was leveraged from the Japanese Embassy, BellSouth/Telcor/MoviStar, and FISE. The donors felt more comfortable donating to schools because the combination of donor and private-sector support and the quality improvements in the classroom led to a greater likelihood of longer-term impact. Whether introducing practical skills through innovative projects or helping schools leverage additional funds through business contacts, AMCHAM had a huge impact on the school communities.

Following the AMCHAM vision to teach children skills that enhance self-sufficiency, AMCHAM added the *Laboratorios Empresariales*, or School Business Activity, to train directors, teachers, and parents to help students to run school businesses through a partnership with the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in Nicaragua. This innovation brought entrepreneurial ideas and practices to schools and assisted students and communities to become more self-reliant. Led by business students from the UCA, the training sessions were extremely well-attended and introduced business concepts such as business plans, team work, quality control, and meeting deadlines. Because the project had helped strengthen the school councils, community members were well-organized and prepared to quickly implement the school businesses. AMCHAM highlighted the student’s products at an annual School Fair event attended by the U.S. ambassador and the Nicaraguan president.



<< The School Business Fair stand from Escuela Republica Alemana

American–Nicaraguan Foundation

AED joined forces with a program of the American-Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF) that provides support to several hundred primary schools in several service areas, including a school feeding program, furniture donations, school supplies, and book donations. The GDA-ANF program included supporting half the GDA schools with a consistent regimen: each school received the Model School reform, school supplies, furniture, and milk. ANF was extremely successful in securing donations and funds from the United States and distributing more than \$5 million in books, school supplies, and furniture to the schools. ANF learned through its participation in GDA the importance of integrating its donations with teacher training and encouraging community ownership of project initiatives.

One of the contributions was ANF's work in expanding the size of the program by creating new alliances. In 2004, ANF initiated a partnership with Cisa Exportadora, a Nicaraguan company that sells coffee to international roasters such as Starbucks. Cisa decided to expand the Model School program to 12 more schools and support two additional facilitators.

ANF also introduced the following activities through the GDA project by leveraging additional funds:

- **Campaign against Dengue and Malaria** — With the help of the private-sector partner Western Union, ANF carried out this five-day event in 60 schools. The project ultimately encouraged more

Cisa
Exportadora
sponsors
13 schools >>



community involvement in the schools, which is one of the primary Model School reform components.

- **Healthy Communities Project** — ANF used a large donation of liquid soap to implement school hand-washing campaigns that promote good hygiene.
- **Sports and Recreation Activity** — With the support of an international non-governmental organization, Food for the Poor, and the multinational company, Toyota Rent-a-Car, ANF created a new program to pay for the local shipping and transport of 1,059 items of sports equipment donated from the United States. It also engaged 30 soccer trainers, some from national professional soccer teams, to work with children in 30 participating schools.

“The support from ANF has been important in the schools because it is a combination of material support, methodological support, and community participation. The school material donations have more impact with the trainings...GDA has given us the opportunity to deepen our understanding of each community and its members have developed abilities in leadership and management and a better understanding of how to teach and motivate students.”

— **Christina Pereira**
former ANF educational advisor

Putting the Ingredients Together

The Multiplier Effect of GDA

As the GDA/MSE program evolved, the different contributions became more integrated and inter-related. The private sector learned how its support could bring about education quality. At the same time, the communities began to understand the value and importance of teacher training and started raising additional funds to send their teachers to more training. In many cases, these funds actually came from the school businesses started through the AMCHAM-UCA School Business Activity.

In May 2005, AED staff examined the factors that contributed to more effective school sponsorships. The team developed the following continuum representing the relationship between the GDA schools and sponsors. As sponsors move up the engagement scale from an “inactive” to “optimal” level, the relationship becomes more strategic, as the level of support transforms from a one-time philanthropic donation to a strategic alliance. At the optimal level, both the sponsor and school community make an investment in education and both experience the ensuing benefits. The analysis showed that the quality of sponsorship did not depend on a large monetary donation. While the size of a donation was one criteria of analysis, a school-sponsor alliance could still reach the optimal level with a smaller donation when other elements were present, such as “high and consistent frequency of contact” and “strategic interaction with the school.”

*“We are not educators.
But being close to the
school can help give ideas
about training, to see
what is needed, to serve
as a bridge with other
institutions.”*

— **Agustin Fuente**
manager of Esso Standard Oil

GDA/MSE School Sponsorship Engagement Scale

Inactive	Minimal	Average	Optimal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sponsor signed agreement, but stopped providing support ■ \$0 donation (cash or in-kind) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sponsor participates in one or two events with the school; infrequent, inconsistent communication with school ■ \$0-\$5,000 donation (cash or in-kind) ■ Donation based solely on sponsor's criteria and capacities ■ One-way exchange between school and sponsor occurs ■ Sponsor's representative is at a minimal seniority level and has no authority to make decisions ■ Sponsor has basic knowledge of school's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sponsor participates in two to four events and maintains regular communication with school. ■ \$5,000-\$10,000 donation (cash or in-kind) ■ Donation is based upon sponsor's criteria and capacities as well as some of school's criteria ■ Two-way exchange between school and sponsor occurs ■ Sponsor's representative is at an average seniority level and can communicate to a higher level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High and consistent frequency of contact exists ■ \$10,000 and up donation (cash or in-kind) ■ Donations are based on negotiation between school community and sponsor; donations are relevant and have an impact on school quality ■ Sponsor and school jointly plan at the onset of the sponsorship ■ Sponsor's representative is at the highest seniority level and can make final decisions ■ Sponsor engages in strategic interaction with school ■ Sponsor understands well how to improve educational quality.

Motivating the Sponsor: Escuela Miguel Montealegre Gasteazoro

Don Orlando Montealegre Gasteazoro, owner of Hotel Cosigüina in Chinandega joined the School Sponsorship Program in 2001. Disillusioned by the lack of support from the MECD and teacher absenteeism, he became an inactive sponsor. With the encouragement and support of a GDA facilitator, Don Orlando eagerly re-engaged with his school community. Even though the monetary value of his collaboration is small, Don Orlando's active and personal involvement with the school has already made an impact.

At a school council meeting, the teachers of Escuela Miguel Montealegre Gasteazoro commented on the contributions of their padrino:

"It seems that Don Orlando already has forgotten all the bad things that the other teachers have done before, because now he has turned us around and provides three

meals to the teachers, he brings them a good bed with mattress and sheets, and he gives them economic incentives to help with the transportation. When the teachers have to go to a meeting or training, he even brings them in his truck. He also brings milk, notebooks, pencils, erasers, and other things so that the children don't miss classes because of a lack of school materials. The most surprising and wonderful thing is that he participates in the parent teacher council meetings and brings refreshments and eats with the teachers and parents."

Through the GDA Project, Don Orlando helped shine a light within the community on the importance of education.

Factors that helped strengthen the partnerships between schools and sponsors, infusing the alliance with synergy and sustainability, include:

■ **Frequent and consistent contact**

Communication is important for both sides. Schools need to communicate their needs. Sponsors require regular progress reports. The companies that were located close to the schools were the most successful in matching donations with the actual needs of the school.

■ **Size of donation**

Regardless of the actual dollar amount, the greater the level of commitment the more engaged the sponsor and school became in the alliance.

■ **Donations based on negotiation between school community and sponsor**

These donations are more relevant and have a greater impact on quality.

■ **Sponsor and school jointly plan at the onset of the sponsorship**

Creating a joint plan reinforces the idea of teamwork and commitment within the alliance.

■ **Senior-level representation by sponsor**

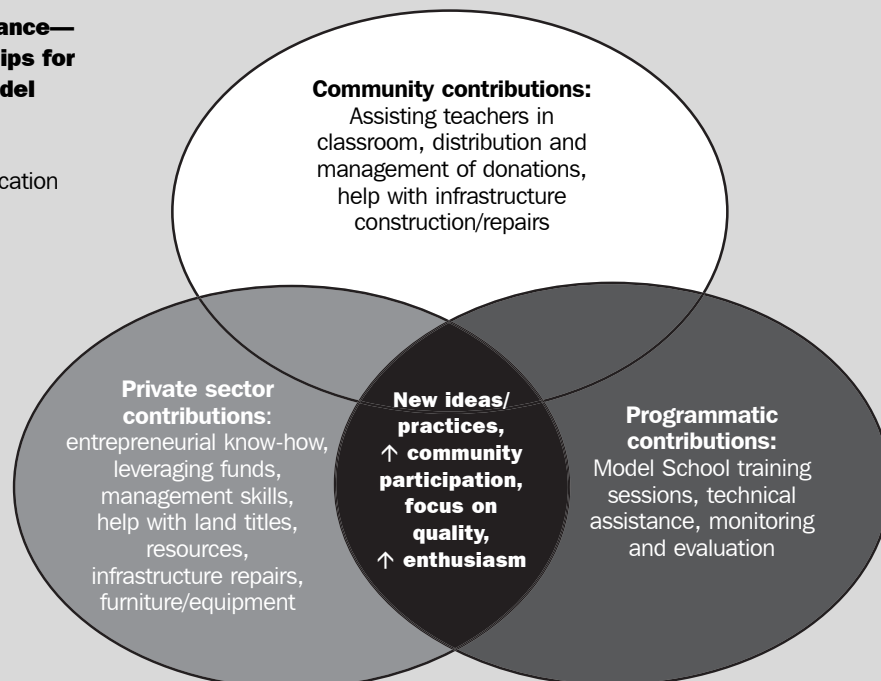
Having a decision-maker represent the school project ensures sustainability of the alliance.

“Although Ismara is the one responsible for following up with the functioning school, almost all the workers visit it; all feel responsible for the school.”

— representative from ENRON,
sponsor of Escuela Antonio Lara
Carvajal, Chinandega

**Global Development Alliance—
Public-Private Partnerships for
Education/Nicaragua Model
School Expansion**

Interrelated Support for Education
through GDA



“I have observed many advances in the students’ development of oral expression, and the teachers’ good human relations, which help them coordinate the school better. The school has improved!”

— representative of Grupo LAFISE, sponsor of Escuela República Alemana

■ More employees involved in school projects

Having more people involved brings innovative ideas to the project and reinforces CSR benefits for the company.

Benefits for School Communities

While each school has its own unique story relating how it was impacted by GDA, the intersection of private-sector contributions and USAID funds has left an indelible mark on these Nicaraguan school communities. The benefits of the relationship between the school and the private sector are difficult to measure, and for some GDA schools it was as simple as a sponsor fomenting a sense of responsibility and commitment among the members of a school community. Regardless of the individual benefits, the popularity of the project continues to draw more partners into action and has created a demand for increases in teacher training.

School Achievement

Throughout the GDA/MSE project, efforts were made to track the progress at the school level through surveys, Spanish and mathematics achievement tests, a Model School grading system, and an impact evaluation report.

The standardized tests administered to third graders in a sample of 26 schools revealed positive results. In almost all types of schools

“Transmitting the Concept of Quality”

“We have succeeded in changing some ideas ... for example, the concept of cleaning. I can say that it is clean if I pick up the garbage and put it aside. But in a company this concept is different. To be clean means that there is no garbage or waste on the patio, nor is it just put aside. When we began the program we thought that we were in heaven. But when we started to speak with the representative of the company, she told me that it was necessary to improve because she was analyzing us from another mentality. The business transmitted to us a concept of quality that has to do with the student from when he enters and extends after he leaves school, and with the way that the classrooms are organized, with attention to the students’ bathrooms, with attention to the children’s library, with attention to the food service. It is an ample concept of quality which implies that life outside of the classroom is also educating the student.”

— GDA/MSE School Director



represented in the GDA/MSE program, both female and male students showed marked improvement in the mastery of Spanish and mathematics from 2003 to 2005. Multigrade schools showed the most significant improvement with an average test score increase of 15%. It is difficult to see changes in educational improvement indicators in just a few years, and changes are often recognized in small percentage gains. The large increase suggests that the combination of private-sector support and Model School teacher training helped the GDA/MSE schools make more rapid and significant academic improvements.

Benefits for School Sponsors

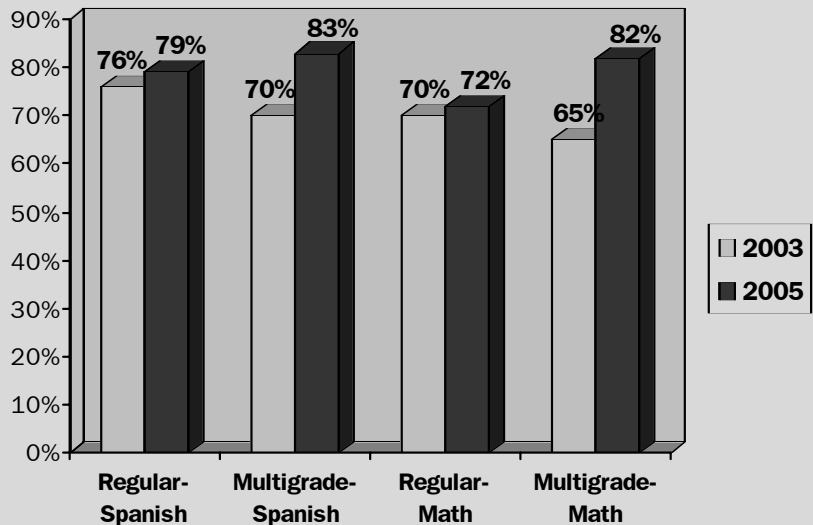
Through their experiences in the project, the private partners began to take more ownership of education initiatives. With AED's guidance, they learned various ways to bring about education quality, as well as understand how the Model School methodology can transform a school community. For many partners, enthusiasm for supporting a school community was enhanced by being connected with a larger USAID initiative. Participating GDA partners also began to view the project as a model of corporate social responsibility for Nicaragua.

As a CSR initiative, the benefits to private-sector partners are multifaceted and numerous. The following is a list of ways the GDA/MSE project benefited private businesses:

- Company-worker relations improve.
- Visibility increases and creates better public relations for the company.

Test Score Averages in GDA/MSE Schools*

Regular vs. Multigrade Modalities, 2003 and 2005



* It should be noted here that there was also a significant difference in the number of students taking tests. The total number decreased from 1,010 to 869. This phenomenon can be directly attributed to the severe storms and flooding that Nicaragua experienced in October 2005 when the tests were administered. During this month many students did not attend school in the rural parts of the country.

“Now our sponsor responds specifically to the needs of our school.”

— teacher from Escuela Miramar

- Company gains valuable business contacts.
- Improving education produces a better workforce for company.
- Helping tackle education challenges makes the private sector an agent of development for the entire country.

Inherent Risks of the Partnership Approach

As one considers taking the school sponsorship to other countries, a few inherent risks need to be addressed:

- The school-sponsor relationship can create dependency if community ownership is not built into the initiative from its onset.
- While companies might desire flexibility in deciding how to support each school, minimum standards, quality control and guidance to the sponsors help create greater consistency of support and lead to more effective sponsorships.
- Private-sector partners are not education experts. The lack of knowledge of education issues can create communication barriers between sectors and can hinder the project’s goals if the needed expertise is not engaged.

The GDA/MSE project helped minimize these risks by strengthening relationships between sponsors, school managers, and community members and by providing education expertise and guidance to schools and sponsors. Project staff members also prepared a best practices guide for private-sector support to assist partners in starting a school sponsorship and providing guidelines for partnership decision-making.

Another Alliance Success Story: Escuela Miramar

The teachers of Escuela Miramar comment on the changes they witnessed as a result of an alliance with their sponsor Generadora Eléctrica Occidental (GEOSA):

“With the arrival of the GDA-AMCHAM project, our sponsor GEOSA became reactivated,” said María Estela, a teacher at Miramar. “Now our sponsor responds specifically to the needs of the school. GEOSA started giving the teachers bonuses again, provides transportation for the teachers, donates some didactic materials for the school, pays for the maintenance of the computers, and collaborates with the community in repairing the school center. They also donated the pump for the water storage tank, and they constructed a bodega to store the students’ food.”

Another teacher, Isabel added, “At the end of the school year, our sponsor also recognizes two of the best students of Escuela Miramar by bringing them to the company for one month, providing them with jobs, uniforms, and salaries equal to those given to permanent workers. The objective of the job simulation is to further develop their skills and promote a vision of entrepreneurship in the students.”

“The company helps not only the school, but also the parents of the community,” said another teacher, Fabiola. “GEOSA has constructed five houses for those families who had nowhere to live yet continually collaborated with the school. The sponsor provided these donations in order to stimulate community participation as a way to support the children’s education.”

Lessons Learned

Examining the GDA /MSE Model

The project has shown the potential synergy of a public-private partnership. Initial evidence is that many of the changes are sustainable. Private-sector partners continue to sponsor schools and AMCHAM and ANF have learned how to better bring about education quality and how to better manage this type of project. The hope is that these initiatives will continue to gain momentum and force in Nicaragua. The following is a list of lessons learned from the GDA Nicaragua experience:

- **Donations are more effective when given in tandem with quality education reforms.** The combination of teacher training and donations made the overall impact greater at the school level.
- **Progress at school level creates greater enthusiasm among sponsors.** The business-minded sponsors were interested in seeing immediate results. While lasting improvements in education can take time, AED found it imperative to keep the sponsors informed on the school's progress or trouble areas by encouraging regular communication between the sponsor and school. When sponsors began to see results they typically became more engaged with the schools and further motivated to continue support.
- **Private-sector sponsors can stimulate reforms at school level.** Sponsors can also act as a stimulus for more action. School communities often worked harder to improve education in an effort to reinforce the sponsor relationship. In the GDA/MSE project, both sides are held accountable for producing positive results in an alliance.
- **Small business projects and community participation reinforced each other.** The community participation component of the

Model School reform was one of the keys to success in all areas of the program. With the reform in place, small school businesses were extremely successful in harnessing community support and fostering ownership of school improvement projects. Schools can now finance their own trainings and the purchase of new resources with money from the businesses.

- **The private sector helps transmit a new sense of “quality” to the schools.** After receiving initial support from sponsors, school communities took better care of their facilities, took pride in the donations, and began to initiate other activities.
- **Peer support encourages private-sector participation.** Many sponsors felt more comfortable with their collaboration knowing that they were part of a larger initiative and had the support of other sponsors. The dialogue among private sector partners during meetings was always a valuable exchange of experiences and ideas.

Looking Ahead

Replicating the GDA /MSE Model

The GDA/MSE experience proved that it takes a tremendous effort to mix all the ingredients together and create a successful public-private partnership for education. AED's role in coordinating the partnership was vital to its effectiveness. The project demonstrated that private-sector sponsors need attention and guidance, and that time and energy are required to maintain enthusiasm and quality of support among sponsors.

It is evident that a successful model for public-private partnerships in education has emerged from the Nicaragua GDA project. With a careful mix of the right partnership ingredients, the GDA/MSE model can be replicated. In many developing nations the private sector remains an untapped resource for education initiatives. The following list of recommendations should be taken into consideration for future efforts in public-private partnerships in education both in Nicaragua as well as on the global scale:

- **Facilitate more communication among all the sponsors.** The sponsors bring innovation to the alliance. Sharing ideas facilitates the spread of best practices, brainstorming of more innovative ideas, as well as collaboration on national level activities.
- **Take private-sector support to the policy level.** The private sector's presence is needed at national roundtable forums to ensure that its voice is heard. Businesses have unique insights into what type of curriculum skills could be introduced to the classroom to help raise the productivity of the national workforce.
- **Provide more public relations attention for those sponsors seeking visibility and more outreach to potential sponsors.** An

award program could be put in place affording the businesses good public relations and healthy competition among themselves.

- **Create a system that regularly tracks contributions, progress in schools, lessons learned, and the best practices.** A public-private partnership should include monitoring the impact of an intervention as well as the impacts of an alliance. Tests and surveys can be expensive, but they provide effective education indicators for project performance when the sample size is large and the same schools are used from year to year for comparison.
- **Instill a sense of community participation and ownership in all education initiatives.** Public-private partnerships, such as the GDA/MSE project, are delicate balancing acts. The project must be careful not to create a dependency on the private sector and compromise the sustainability of the overall goals.