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**PERU**

# EDUCATION

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*Milagros Salas, CETT trainer, works with second grade students in Francisco Bolognesi school in Ventanilla-Callao, a low-income area near Lima.*

Rural areas in Peru suffer from a sub-standard education system; the 2004 national test reported that only 2.3% of students in rural schools meet grade-level standards in reading, while only 1.3% meet basic arithmetic standards. The low quality of education results in a poorly educated workforce, making it more difficult for rural economies to grow and contributing to out-migration. The general education law, passed in 2003, proposes to decentralize the education system, transferring responsibilities and decision-making from the central ministry, headquartered in Lima, to regional and local governments, schools and their communities. While those changes could improve the quality of education through strengthened oversight and timely decision-making, implementation of the new law has been slow.

A USAID-funded education activity, Innovations in Decentralization and Active Schools (AprenDes), works in this context to improve the quality of rural education and promote decentralization of the sector. The activity operates in two of Peru's coca-growing regions, San Martin and Ucayali, to incorporate new teaching and school management methods that result in higher levels of achievement. These new methodologies, referred to as the "active schools approach," draw on a system that has achieved substantial success throughout Latin America. The activity also works at both the national and regional government levels to move forward decentralization of the education sector. The overall intention is to demonstrate successful methodological options for the national Ministry of Education to replicate.

The activity currently works with 366 schools, covering 16,072 students, in the Ucayali and San Martin regions. AprenDes has trained 690 teachers, and 366 CONEIs (similar to school boards) actively participate in the activity to support their children's education. A total of 202 new workbooks and other educational materials have been developed. To help improve their performance, teachers now have access to 14 resource centers, with computers, photocopiers, and libraries.

A second USAID education activity complements the work of AprenDes to improve the quality of Peruvian education, focusing specifically on reading and writing. The activity, entitled Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training, or CETT, is a U.S. Presidential initiative implemented in Peru and several other countries. The goal is to reduce high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement by

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**Partners:** Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno Regional de San Martín, Dirección Regional de Educación de San Martín, Gobierno Regional de Ucayali, Dirección Regional de Educación de Ucayali, Consejo Nacional de Educación (CNE), GRADE, Foro Educativo, Asociación de Publicaciones Educativas, CEPCO, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP).

improving reading instruction in the first through third grades. To do this, the activity trains teachers, provides them with teaching and learning materials, and helps them apply assessment tools and skills to better target their efforts.

Both activities are showing concrete results. Evaluation of the ApreDes activity shows that:

- **Students are learning more.** In standardized tests carried out since 2004, students in ApreDes schools obtained scores which were higher than their counterparts in schools which are not part of the program. In communication skills 61% of students in 2007 achieved mastery and near mastery compared with 30% of students at the beginning of the program (2004).
- **Students are staying in school.** In 2006, the percentage of children in USAID-funded schools who completed primary school in the normal cycle was 46%, 13% above the level of schools in the control group.
- **Parents are actively involved in their children's education, improving quality.** Under this approach, schools are managed by CONEIs made up of parents, teachers, students and school principals. The percentage of these CONEIs that conduct school operational planning is now at 100%, a 11% increase over the previous year.
- **Regional governments are actively supporting the activity** by dedicating local resources to the activity.

The CETT activity is successfully developing improved reading and writing skills in a broad swath of Peruvian children. Since 2002, the activity has worked with 86,125 children in 601 schools, and has trained 2,837 teachers and 601 school principals. The schools are located in both urban and rural areas in the regions of Lima, Callao, Piura, and Ucayali. This year 961 teachers will be trained and 117 principals of 174 schools. Consequently, 29,450 students will benefit.



*Fourth grade girls reading the learning guides produced by USAID's ApreDes. (Palestina community, San Martín region).*



*Second grade children use the active schools approach by working in groups according to their interests. (Shepte community, San Martín region).*