



### 3. Micro-School Level



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This chapter presents bricklayers at work at the school level. It identifies and traces how they layered existing components of the education system on top of *READ* and both on top of *MCPCVME*. Layering, in turn, enabled them to contribute to the functioning of school-based management in the short term as well as equipping some local actors to become agents of the intervention's sustainability.

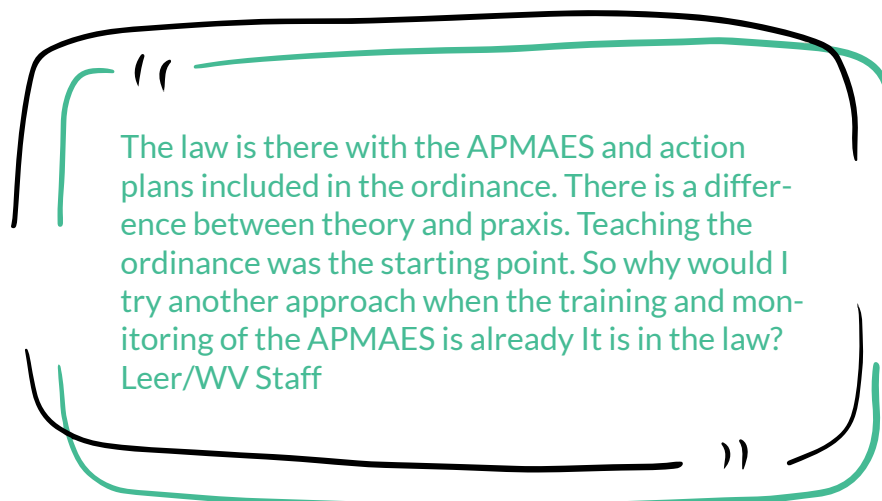
The chapter highlights:

- The ways in which layering was used to re-combine and rearrange the principles, tools, and practices of social accountability so that they were feasible and contributed to change.
- The ways in which bricklayers focused on strengthening their and the school communities' infrastructure as well as how their relational approach to social accountability interacted with their methodological choices.

These elements help account for how *READ* and *MCPECVME* contributed to subtly introducing innovations toward strengthening school systems, as well as mitigating negative interactions with other interventions in the system.

## 3.1 Introduction

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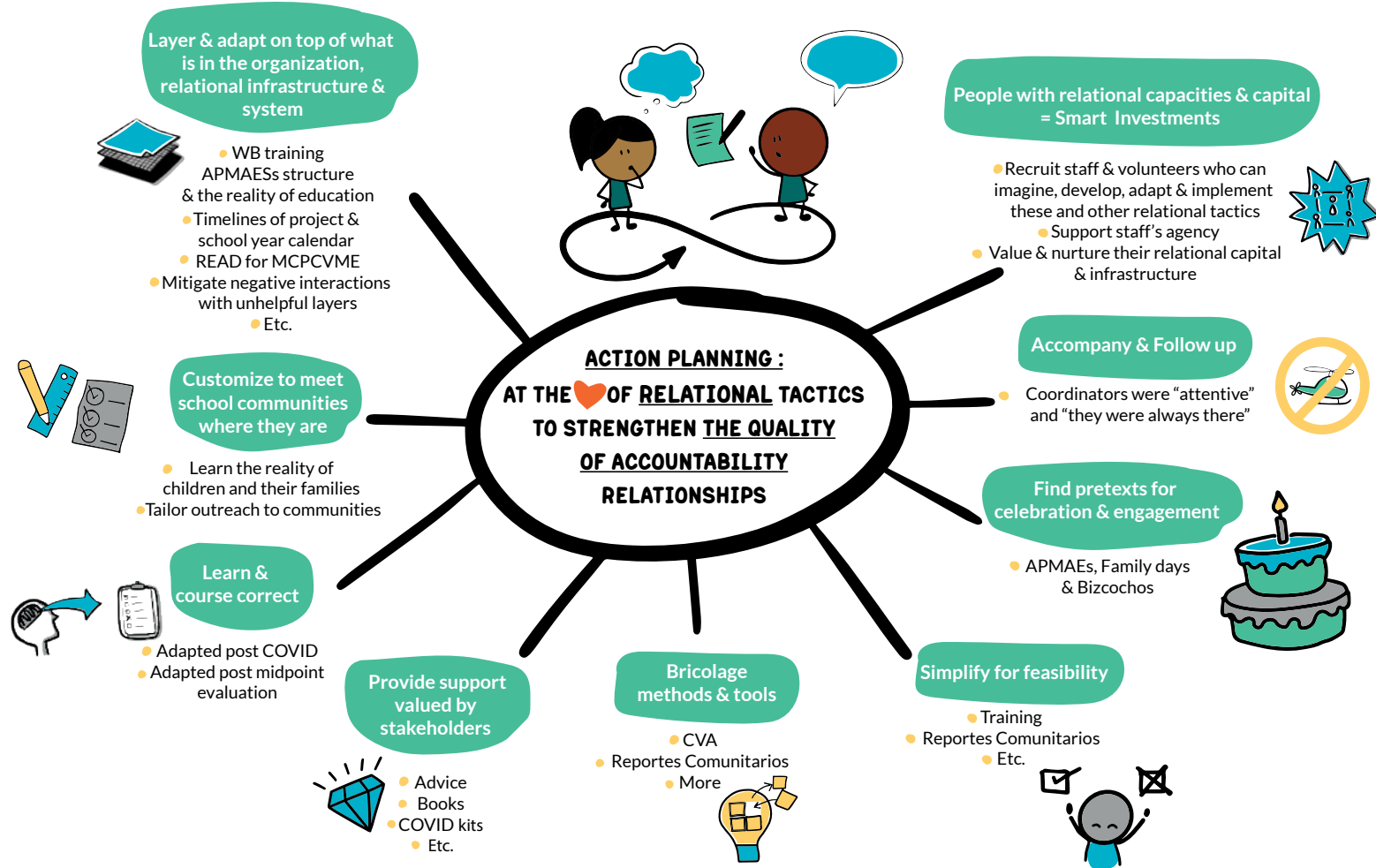


“The law is there with the APMAES and action plans included in the ordinance. There is a difference between theory and praxis. Teaching the ordinance was the starting point. So why would I try another approach when the training and monitoring of the APMAES is already in the law?”  
Leer/WV Staff

This chapter discusses key insights into how World Vision’s *READ* and *Mi Comunidad Participa en Como Va Mi Escuela* (MCPCVME) used social accountability to achieve interrelated outcomes. These include greater responsiveness to parents’ and students’ needs as well as helping them improve how they worked with principals at the school level and staff from MINERD. Together, they renegotiated roles and responsibilities, and their regular, facilitated interactions helped build new levels of trust and other resources that enabled joint action to reach goals that they could not advance on their own. In other words, finding a way to rework each school social’s contract (i.e., the agreement between parents and the authorities on their roles and responsibilities) was part and parcel of obtaining more tangible wins—whether a roof or teaching materials—as well as strengthening individual school-level systems.

World Vision’s bricklayers layered *READ* on top of existing components of the education system (Box 6), and MCPCVME on top of both. How, where, and when bricklayers opted to layer goes some ways toward illuminating the methodologies they *bricolaged*, the relationships on which they built and also strengthened, as well as how these two components interacted in specific schools and across schools (see Chapter 4 for the effects at the policy level). Figure 4 synthesizes bricklayers’ tricks of the trade at the school level, which is consistent with World Vision and its local teams’ disposition to take a collaborative approach to social accountability. It also shares *key components* of a *new generation of social accountability that contributes to responsiveness and is an operational means to rework social contracts and support democracies that deliver* (Box 7).

Figure 4: Bricklayers' tricks of the trade at the school level



## 3.2 Layering during READ

The *Reportes Comunitarios* (Community Reports) and, in particular the action planning moment, is the basis of READ’s methodology. As the quote above notes, it was not designed, iterated, or implemented in a vacuum. It was layered on top of regulation that requires schools to set up APMAES—by the end of 2022, 229 schools had an APMAE that received training and support from READ and 87% kept a work plan. It built on a tool for which the World Bank had trained a group of civil society organizers, who in turn adapted the community score cards from Malawi and later Peru (see more in [Box 5](#) as well as in [Chapter 4](#)). The following section highlights key adaptations.

1.

**The tool was tailored to meet school stakeholders in their “real-life” communities.** The generic *Reporte Comunitario* was customized to the Dominican education sector. To do this, the team layered it on top of the sector’s legal infrastructure by anchoring the social accountability process in APMAEs and focusing on making them work in practice. A total of 7,469 members of APMAEs and Centre Committees were trained in how to develop an action plan, 4,980 participated in talks regarding the roles and functions of APMAEs, 2,311 participated in talks on the importance of education and the role of the family, and 197 APMAEs developed action plans to promote families’ participation in school planning. To make this possible a key principle of the READ team was to make training in accountability as accessible as possible.

*In the first year of [Leer], the community report was all structured based on what we learned from the World Bank, but the reality of education, of community leaders, was that it [the report] was not going to work in the time they had. We changed it, we made it simpler, because it was not viable. The important thing is the most basic. Use ideas to involve the family in school with simple things that would make a difference. ... The changes to the community report [we introduced over time]. We did it with fewer lines. The important thing is to have an action plan, support from the management team, have a deadline—which is what the ordinance says you must have.*  
Leer/WV Staff

## 2.

**The simplified training helped APMAEs to better understand their roles and become more propositional.** For example, in Alma Rosa Chotén, the APMAE president said in 2024 that “they helped the AMPAE better understand what it was supposed to do and to better understand the needs.” In Los Conucos, the principal said that the “community was more active” thanks to the training, and the APMAE “became more propositional: they changed from just criticizing to proposing solutions.” This reflects the [collaborative framing of social accountability efforts](#) which the World Vision Dominican Republic team consistently used in both projects evaluated and which was particularly valued by the school stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation. This is a relatively common framing in World Vision beyond the Dominican Republic.

## 3.

**What the training modules achieved was about much more than technical expertise—also strengthening relational capacities which help school communities to build social capital and rework their social contracts on the roles and responsibilities of citizens and the state.** Many school stakeholders compared World Vision’s interventions favorably with others, especially government interventions that were focused on control and oversight, owing to their ability to support problem-solving. Interviews validated the findings of the final evaluations of *READ* and *MCPCVME* projects. Both of these identified that parents valued the organization of meetings to address school issues or the ability to mobilize parents in activities to support the school—which are locally significant given the perennial challenges in engaging Dominican parents in school life, let alone to meet often unrealistic expectations of what such engagement should look like.<sup>15</sup> These also reflect a [common finding](#) in social accountability interventions beyond World Vision which provide the time, focus, and leadership to support a new quality of relationships: once community representatives co-construct their understanding of what their role is and reflect on what service providers are actually able to achieve, they can develop new relational capabilities and, generally, become more constructive. No single actor can produce this new agreement, but once it exists in a school it can become a critical resource for collective improvement.

4.

This was seen as part of a wider package of support in several schools visited with intrinsic value that also contributed to World Vision's reputation and social capital (i.e., networks, norms, and trust). Several respondents also recognized the benefits of the reading clubs set up during *READ*, which World Vision also facilitated. In some cases, school stakeholders were able to make the most of *READ* materials as well as experience the value of having personnel dedicated to helping children read in the classroom and after school. In the school libraries we visited, there was ample evidence of *READ* materials still in use. In Anibal Ponce, the librarian noted that children need new *READ* books because they already know their favorites by heart. These anecdotes suggest that the relationship between World Vision and stakeholders in those school communities has elements that survived long after the implementation of activities ended.

5.

A key aim of the coordinators interviewed was to “meet schools where they were,” and schools' stakeholders highlighted these efforts and their pay-offs. This meant including new activities as part of the intervention. Among them, additional relational tactics stand out. In El Quemado, the evaluation interviewed a former *READ* volunteer who then became a project mobilizer (*movilizadora*) and is now a teacher in the school, and still uses what she learned in *READ*. She recalled that she began providing reading support for children who had difficulties, which required parental approval. If the parents did not come to the school, teachers would make home visits. This helped them get approval but also “learn the reality of the children and their families.” She then reflected, “I feel the other projects has that essence from *READ*.” In meeting school stakeholders where they were, the *READ* team directed tailored outreach to communities that did not typically engage in school management. For example, what they found out helped them identify better hours to hold meetings, among other adjustments. A strategic decision that prioritized relationships underpinned this approach. World Vision's leadership explicitly incentivized, opened space, and valued the time and resources staff needed to make these calls, and find out how to do so. This differs substantially from the “best practice” logic where all schools and families are expected to be treated as if they were the same (i.e., where intervention homogeneity and fidelity are key).

6.

Related to this, a crucial element of World Vision’s approach in both *READ* and, later, *MCPCVME* was **accompaniment, or follow-up**. In the ex-post evaluation, we found that follow-up was fundamental to maintaining momentum in schools. All the schools visited conveyed this message. In *READ*, each community coordinator was responsible for work in six to ten schools in a single region. As a result, the coordinators were regularly present in the schools. School stakeholders interviewed highlighted that the coordinators were “*attentive*” and “*they were always there for us*.” As the APMAE president in Alma Rosa Chotén mentioned, “*there was good follow-up, weekly*” during *READ*. Relational work is transaction-intensive, but this is partly why communities viewed the work positively and why in schools such as El Quemado they distinguished it from other reform efforts.

7.

**Another key relational tactic was finding pretexts for celebration, which could engage more reluctant families in school life and motivate them to become part of the community.** Numerous schools that the ex-post evaluation visited mentioned *Bizcochos* (cakes). The team believed that APMAEs should be valued and celebrated and March 3 was determined as the day to officially celebrate APMAEs—“*no one was doing that at the time ... everyone still does it today*.” Whether on March 3 or other days, *Bizcochos* have become celebrations where the aim was to bring the school community together, and to inspire school stakeholders to value the work of the APMAE—they were mentioned spontaneously in most if not all schools visited. *Bizcochos* were how the World Vision team was able to do this in a contextually grounded way. Relational tactics like these built trust with the schools in a durable way, which enabled the team to lay lasting foundations with school counterparts to resolve collective-action problems. Celebrating success is also a key part of the [CVA field guide](#) recommendations after action plans have been implemented.

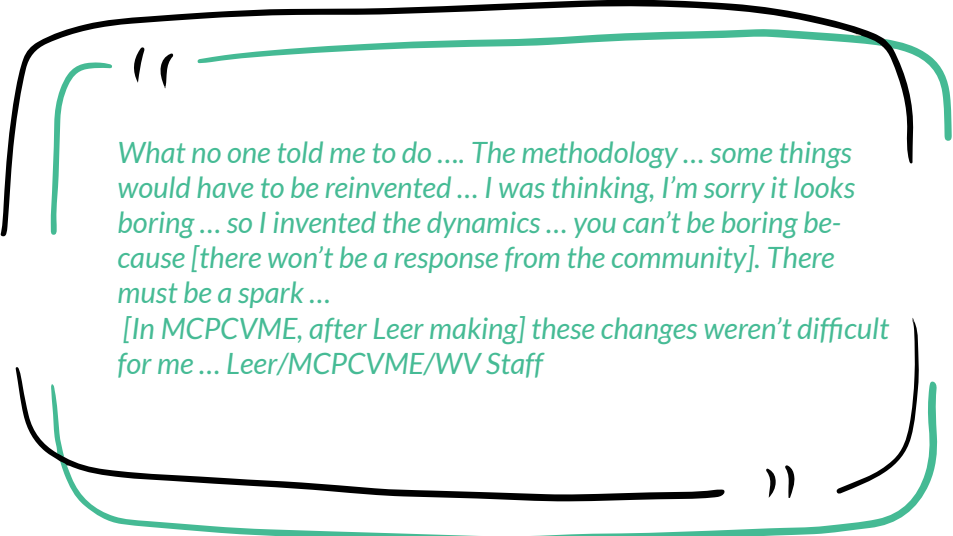


## 8.

The relational capacities of the World Vision team were instrumental in imagining, developing, adapting, and implementing these tactics. They were also a key feature that the schools highlighted when asked about the value of READ and MCPCVME. What made the community component *different*, therefore, was the community coordinators' soft skills. Many school stakeholders interviewed believed that the World Vision READ project's community component was the "*bright spot*."<sup>16</sup> The praise of these relational capacities can be summed up as: "*very nice*," "*very dynamic*," "*good communicators*," "*accessible*;" they "*brought energy*." These capacities were deployed during READ and over the course of MCPCVME, as captured in the project's final evaluation. World Vision's project management, unlike others', seems to have explicitly hired staff with these soft skills, which staff also appreciated finding in their colleagues. These skills and their relational effects are often overlooked by the research that informs "smart buys" and other studies, yet they are central to both effectiveness and sustainability of resilient public service organizations, i.e., those that thrive thanks to their ability to use social capital to enable ongoing improvement and high performance.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.3 Hiring for and Implementing Relational Change-making

By the end of 2019, it was clear that the MCPCVME—a World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA)—project would shortly begin and READ was soon coming to an end. One of World Vision's key aims was to retain as much of the READ field team as possible. As the GPSA project was slow to commence (originally intended for 2019), it was felt that there was an opportunity. The READ management made the case to senior management that for the MCPCVME that they should ask the coordinators to apply. "*These coordinators] believed [in the mission], they came from community spaces, they have been leaders, they worked with APMAES, they got into dangerous places. Our position is that this, above all, is community work, and they gave themselves [with a committed and honest attitude] to get the results*"—school stakeholders used similar language to refer to these coordinators. World Vision's management argued that retention presented a challenge, but there was at least some intention to do this, and created an administrative bridge with unrestricted funding. Although there was a formal process that attracted dozens of applications, the successful candidates were READ coordinators. This meant that there were relational skills and prior relationships that could be layered upon.



*What no one told me to do .... The methodology ... some things would have to be reinvented ... I was thinking, I'm sorry it looks boring ... so I invented the dynamics ... you can't be boring because [there won't be a response from the community]. There must be a spark ...  
[In MCPCVME, after Leer making] these changes weren't difficult for me ... Leer/MCPCVME/WV Staff*

**This relational approach to hiring staff for the MCPCVME project, and the relational infrastructure in which World Vision's bricklayers were embedded, would inform the MCPCVME's team's subsequent decisions.** This included many moments in which there were trade-offs between adaptation to context and the relational aspects of the intervention and technical aspects, but the team always tended toward the value they gained by working with others and/or enabling others to draw on and improve the quality of relationships. This would become clearer in view of the (often negative) interactions with the World Bank's *Como Va Mi Escuela* (CVME) project (Box 8)—which seems to have built on the assumptions of a “best practice” replication pathway rather than one based on resonance.

**Key parts of READ's methodological architecture directly informed MPCVME's approach. Yet, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and as discussions with CVME were unfolding, the MCPCVME team had to regroup and reconsider which parts of its planned methodology might be used and which new components might be necessary (Box 9).** Since the project team spent much of the year in lockdown, they focused on designing the MCPCVME course (published in August 2021). The course was partly based on the action-planning guide in the *READ* project, but in the spirit of making the training as accessible and relevant to nurturing relational capacities and resources as possible, the project team came up with a simplified version. Similarly, the simple summary of what APMAEs had to do came from *READ* teaching materials. In addition, the team managed to unlock funds to distribute COVID kits throughout lockdown to let communities know that their relationship was meaningful and that they still cared about them.

Thus, when they were eventually able to go back to schools, bricklayers built on the relational tactics they had adopted during *READ*. The evaluation identified a consistent use of “*Bizcochos*” to celebrate moments of success and to broaden community participation in schools. One key moment was celebrating the “APMAE’s day,” but the team also organized a Parents’ Day in one (non-*READ*) school, Mercedes Altigracia Cabral de León, to mobilize additional resources to upgrade dangerous iron railings in the school buildings. Similarly, numerous schools consulted underscored the importance of sustained, regular accompaniment from the World Vision team.

### 3.4 MCPCVME Facilitating Action Planning: School Management that Can Deliver in Practice

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The project team saw the mid-term evaluation as a turning point. The MCPCVME was far from reaching many of its log-frame targets, as many other interventions were affected by the pandemic, so it was covered in red.<sup>18</sup> However, the project team took this as an opportunity to pause and reflect, and they decided to prioritize two things they wanted to turn green: (1) ensure that the model could be extended to all 60 schools and (2) ensure that there was a workable protocol derived from the model that could potentially be adopted and adapted by MINERD—this latter point is discussed at length in [Chapter 4](#).

Feedback on the MCPCVME project is overwhelmingly positive. The project website has a space for feedback and of 2,394 ratings on Google reviews, the average rating was 4.8 out of 5. Given that the project estimated that it engaged 21,000 students and parents, this unprompted response rate is extraordinary. Indeed, many of these responses were made after the project’s final evaluation.

Since then, and a year after the project ended, the evaluation found the following results. Like *READ*, and building on it, MCPCVME helped school stakeholders to see community participation in school management differently. At the heart of these results, as in [other social accountability interventions](#), is the facilitated action-planning process when actors come together and engage in a new form of deliberation that strengthens their relationships and capacity for joint problem-solving, in addition to presenting particular solutions.

So, as in *READ*, MCPCVME layering, bricolaging, and relational tactics were able to help motivate school stakeholders to commit, create plans, and work collectively to achieve change to improve the quality of education in *READ* schools. As one APMAE representative in Danilo Ginebra mentioned in the evaluation, “*the action plan motivated us to do something.*” Indeed, this action plan was clearly displayed on the wall



World Vision hired for, customized, and implemented a collaborative approach to social accountability anchored in enabling, facilitating, and following up joint action planning among different stakeholders in school communities. These bricklayers betted on layering their projects on the education system and win-win results from making it work better. They also banked on the potential of people coming together to improve the quality of relationships and, then draw on those social resources to solve specific problems in each school.

The READ and MCPCVME team cumulatively developed and used a long set of tricks to pull off this approach, even when the communities they met posed challenges, donors prioritized technocratic design to interventions, or COVID-19 put the onus on building relationships. Results included responsiveness as well as increased social capital (networks, shared norms, and trust) and reworked social contracts (agreements on roles and responsibilities). The relational outcomes (and the gradual development of the guide to enable them) help to understand the significance of layering one project on top of the other.

While unevenly, different schools continue to benefit from the parts of the process that make most sense for them.

of the school's library at the time of the final evaluation, as a regular reminder for the school management team and APMAE to press on. The principal said that: "*World Vision taught us that one has to look for a solution.*" Or, as the principal of Los Conucos also said: "*having World Vision was helpful because it can help when someone external pushes an agenda. It brings credibility.*" This suggests that the World Vision's accompaniment model, while stretched on a smaller budget, was able to motivate schools to drive forward action-plan commitments. Just as importantly, the team was able to provide continuous support and motivation, which school communities valued and have missed since the end of the project.

Many of the *READ* schools visited had conducted some additional actions from action plans after the close of the project. For example, the biggest achievement for Danilo Ginebra school was rebuilding the roof, and the same engagement process with MINERD described in the final evaluation helped them to refurbish other parts of the school, and they even introduced internet in an area where there is almost no coverage. Alma Rosa Chotén built a cafeteria and some benches. Clearly, some issues remained unaddressed from action plans (e.g., El Quemado still lacked a shaded area of its courtyard). In Anibal Ponce, the community had learned the value of a person dedicated to providing support for reading during *READ*. The gap was noted in the action plan. So, when a new teacher was appointed, they freed another teacher to provide supplementary reading support.

The road was not smooth for these schools. Several of the *READ* schools, Emma Balaguer and Alma Rosa Chotén, and to a lesser degree Mauricio Baez, struggled more than most in the MCPCVME project, despite having been positive cases in *READ*. Emma Balaguer, for example, was considered a “model school” in *READ*, but was one of the most challenging schools for the MCPCVME project. Nonetheless, in all cases, these schools were able to carry out all three phases of the model, develop action plans, and implement these partly during the project and partly after it ended. For example, by the final evaluation, some members of senior management in Mauricio Baez expressed relatively lukewarm support, given their perceptions of relatively limited progress related to a change in the parents’ contributions to school management. However, by the ex-post evaluation this perception had markedly improved. The school team brought the materials from the project, discussed the progress in action planning, and mentioned that they valued and missed MCPCVME approach to “*acompañamiento*” both in the sense of the team’s support and its ongoing nature while it lasted. Indeed, despite the challenges in Alma Rosa Chotén, the principal noted that the APMAE was “*empowered*” and “*the work plan was helpful*.”

Given that formally APMAEs have to change each year, the sustainability of capability in the APMAEs is very challenging and the role played by World Vision’s bricklayers in promoting continuity has had uneven outcomes. In Alma Rosa Chotén, where we attended a hand-over meeting between the old and new APMAE, it was clear that the latter was not up to speed. Similarly, in the Los Conucos school, the APMAE President noted that “*this year the APMAE was less active*.” She attributed this to the new members. Or, as a teacher in the same school said, “*the APMAE was more present in the school than it is today. It was more active in 2018, better integrated*.” This suggests that continual efforts are required to train and support APMAEs either from within the school or through external support. In Anibal Ponce, they noted that the Parents’ School (*Escuela de Padres*) performs some of these functions.

In Danilo Ginebra, the Junta de Centro introduced its own specific modules for handover of APMAEs. Elsewhere, such as in Alma Rosa Chotén, this was much less clear.

At the same time, the evaluation identified individuals, members of the network, who continue largely on their own trying to layer what they learned through their engagement in these interventions from the where they are in the system, which in some cases has changed from before. In addition to the case of the El Quemado teacher, another volunteer, later a coordinator turned técnica, shared her commitment to layering these efforts.

*The projects have given me not only professional but also personal growth. Sometimes I cried when I saw the situation since I saw a child, a vulnerable family with no possibility of being literate, of being listened to. And these projects, both reading and MCPCVME, taught me to see more of the human side .... I think that here where I am currently [a MINERD staff position] and I look back from a distance because I never thought I would grow so much in these 7 years of projects and that is why I feel proud of what I have achieved... that It filled me with joy, I said, but look, it's worth the effort... that I want to continue growing and that there are families who remember it and I know that one of them marks people's lives and that they come back as the mark in a positive way. Leer/MCPCVME/WV Staff*

## Box 6

### School-based Management in the Dominican Republic

The *Ley General de Educación 66-97* sets the basic parameters for school-based management in the Dominican Republic. For the purposes of this evaluation, two bodies are particularly relevant: APMAEs and *Juntas de Centro* (School Committees). These are where parents and local community members can participate in school-based management.

**APMAES were first regulated by Ordinance (*Ordenanza*) 3-94**, stating their mission as “*assisting, strengthening, and supporting teaching and administrative work in schools, thereby ensuring institutional development of schools and the best education for children.*” In 2000, a **USAID-sponsored study** found that schools were disconnected, parents disengaged, and that politicians, principals, or teachers were willing to change things and improve school-based management or education quality. That year, a new *Ordenanza 9-2000* amended the regulation of APMAEs.

Decades later, government data shows that there are APMAES in 89% of the country’s schools. The question is whether they function in practice. A World Bank study that will be discussed in greater depth below (CVME) found that 96% of those they surveyed in schools knew what an APMAE was. Of course, this is a shallow indicator of whether APMAEs function in practice because knowing what an APMAE is says nothing about whether it is effective (see also **Chapter 4** on the political economy context which informs this interpretation).

**The other key component of the school-based management system is the Centre Committee**—which according to the Education Law 66-97 and ***Ordenanza 02-2008*** is an organization for school management and administration in which teachers, students, APMAEs, and representatives of civil society participate. The CVME study found that 95% of schools (i.e., all but three) selected the Centre Committee by assembly or via elections, although again this is a very shallow measure of functionality.

**In practice, the functionality of these bodies is heterogeneous.** Some parents in the APMAE are registered but inactive, in others active members change every year and everything from recruitment to training must start from scratch—which can have knock-on effects on the APMAEs’ representation in the *Juntas de Centro*—and everything is complicated when the principals, teachers, and members of the other key school management bodies themselves are replaced and sent to serve in other schools.

**In some, however, such as Danilo Ginebra, teachers in the Centre Committee had been at the school for years.** The current principal has been in post for 18 years and there has been a functional parents' group ever since. Many members of the teaching staff had previously attended the school, and/or were from the community. So, they knew the context very well. In 2016, the Junta de Centro had a program with the Ministry of Public Administration, in which they included criteria to assess education quality. They even have a system of internal assessment based on quality criteria against which they systematically gather evidence. Danilo Ginebra had its own systems and processes in place to strengthen students' and parents' literacy and to build the capacity of APMAEs even before *READ*, and said that they chose parents to participate in the APMAE who shared the same vision to promote quality.



## Box 7

### A New Generation of Social Accountability

A **recent macro-review** of 20 years of evidence and tacit knowledge of social accountability approaches in over 150 cases found that: **“The main thread of social accountability 3.0 and what distinguishes it from previous generations is a focus on its contribution towards more responsive systems and accountable social contracts. Social accountability should be considered as an operational means to rework social contracts”**.

Thus, the approach to social accountability implemented by the projects evaluated here and their outcomes share characteristics of an emergent generation of social accountability, adapted to World Vision and the education system in the Dominican Republic. Other pillars of this Social Accountability 3.0 seem to be: systems awareness; *Realpolitik*; leverage points; sector-specific approaches; bricolage; layering and time; and transferable learning and portfolio approaches. Many of these are identified throughout this evaluation, with greater attention to layering and time as well as the outcomes of interest.

## Box 8

### *Como Va Mi Escuela*: Relationships mitigate the negative interaction effects with helicopter research

**Como Va Mi Escuela (CVME) took place between 2018 and 2020 and focused on improving government accountability in 180 public schools in the Corredor Duarte** (Puerto Plaza, Santiago, La Vega, Monseñor Nouel, San Cristóbal, Santo Domingo, and the Distrito Nacional). CVME was funded by the World Bank and USAID. The original idea was to support MINERD to build a statistical database of education indicators that monitored school progress. This then evolved into a proposal to include families as well as teachers and that would be something simpler than indicators to make the process accessible for family participation in school management, using a form or report card.

The World Bank and (indirectly) USAID funded MCPECVME under the same umbrella, as part of an approach that will be discussed in greater detail in **Chapter 4**. So, in **addition to building on the foundations of READ, MCPCVME was also intended to build on the CVME project**. A key consequence of this expected layering with CVME is that the World Bank decided in which schools MCPVME would be implemented, prioritizing criteria relevant to CVME's impact evaluation over relational criteria. The schools were chosen for World Vision rather than allowing the organization to choose where it had the best background (e.g., where it had area programs). Unlike in *READ*, the schools were spread out across various regions and each field staff member had to cover as many as 30 schools rather than six to ten in *READ*.<sup>19</sup> This evidently made it harder for the team to provide the previous level of accompaniment. In these schools, World Vision was expected to take this change in CVME's emphasis on including families in school management as their main guide. The World Bank hoped that there would be productive synergies between the two similarly named projects, especially as CVME had a reduced in-country operational team during COVID-19, and hoped that World Vision might fill some gaps.

**However, as the MCPCVPE evaluation explains further, World Vision both found it difficult to make fruitful connections between the two projects owing to issues with how CVME was designed and implemented, and also had to mitigate the negative effects in schools that CVME's "helicopter approach" created.** Methodologically, the World Vision team perceived the tool the CVME team used as being too complicated—the scorecard asked for too much informa-

tion (including an extraordinarily long survey for principals) and not all relevant or accessible to school stakeholders. While these requests may have seemed reasonable from the perspective of researchers trying to acquire statistical information (and test a system for doing so), they contradicted the lessons from *READ*. Recall that the World Vision team had simplified the Community Reports to adapt to the context and that the relational approach had paid off.

**Another related problem was the perception in many schools regarding the CVME project.** While not the World Bank's original intention, the project turned into "helicopter research" from the World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) team. Helicopter research is a term used in Global Health Research to refer to projects where external researchers (usually from the North America or Europe) land in a "partner country" and conduct their work with little or no involvement from the local communities. Indeed, and unlike *READ*, the CVME team provided very limited accompaniment or follow-up in the schools.

**The World Vision team resisted this role and had a difficult relationship with the World Bank's DIME team and its RCT.** Partly as a result, as reported in the baseline, midline, and endline evaluations, several schools remarked that they felt "abandoned" by the project, which led to high levels of dissatisfaction. CVME's endline survey found that less than half of parents and guardians felt that the CVME action plans made a positive difference. Indeed, when the last scorecard was presented, 50% of principals said they did not know, or did not answer. So, by the time MCPCVME began in January 2020, many of the schools were already rather negatively disposed to it.

**Even so, both the final evaluation and this ex-post evaluation found that none of the *READ* schools had significant problems with these negative interaction effects of CVME.** The trust built with schools during *READ* enabled them to buffer the resistance the CVME project created that many non-*READ* schools experienced. In some cases, such as in the Danilo Ginebra school, school stakeholders argued explicitly that "*the MCPCVME project felt like a continuation of READ.*" This was largely due to continuity of World Vision staff who were able

## Box 9

### What are effective components of a Social Accountability Intervention?

COVID-19 hit shortly after the project started and the team had to revisit its entire plan, which was contingent on visiting schools, either to build relationships or to merely implement activities, such as data collection. In other words, during the height of the pandemic, a key component of the intervention could not perform important functions assumed to make the intervention work.

**Furthermore, the World Vision team was worried about new and existing relationships. So, the team came up with a new, albeit unusual, intervention component: they sent hygiene kits to the schools to ensure people remembered that the organization had not abandoned them, both providing value to the schools while showing MINERD their contribution.** In the words of a team member, *“going to schools in a time of precariousness ... [eventually] led a lot to the dialogue in schools having greater openness.”*

From an evaluation standpoint, an organization providing a hygiene kit is not normally considered a part, let alone an important part, of a “technical” social accountability intervention and, taken out of context, might seem a bad way to invest an intervention’s time and money. However, in this specific context, with a **functional approach** to social accountability and its implementation, the “innovative” intervention component was relevant because it played a relational function. In this case, the question is whether it helped strengthen relationships between World Vision and the school community in ways that at least partly replaced the regular visits that were not possible during the pandemic. World Vision team members and some of the school community members we interviewed seem to believe so.