

Progress Report April 2008

Changed Project LC-LA 08/07: Nicaragua, Madriz

1. Introduction

In July 2007, the Lions Clubs Switzerland approved a project to be implemented by the Ministry of Health in the Department of Madriz in Nicaragua. Starting in August 2007, the SODIS Foundation entered the detailed project negotiations with the Ministry of Health. In October, the project generally was approved by the Head of the Ministry of Health at Departmental level. However, the document also had to be approved by the Mayors of the 9 districts involved in the project. This process was very slow and continuously required pushing by the SODIS Foundation. Additionally, there were many changes of staff at central level after the general elections, and finally project preparations had to be suspended in February 2008 due to these difficulties.

Already in 2007, a potential alternative project had been prepared. This proposed project will be implemented by the international NGO "Safe the Children" on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. Safe the Children has been present in this chronically neglected area of the country over the past five year and was the only international present in the zone when hurricane Felix hit the area in October 2007. After this disaster, many organizations entered the zone in order to support disaster mitigation and relief activities. In the framework of the reconstruction phase, Save the Children now wants to launch a massive campaign for promoting water treatment at household level as there is a considerable risk of epidemics of waterborne diseases like diarrhea and cholera. The project will at least benefit 11,000 families, the same as the original project presented to the Lions Clubs in 2007.

2. The original project

In July 2007, the Ministry of Health of the Department of Madriz in Nicaragua and the SODIS Foundation presented a project for large-scale promotion of household water treatment. The initiative emerged from several previous smaller project implementations in the area, which convinced the local director of the Ministry of Health of the effectiveness and impact of simple prevention interventions. The project had been prepared since 2006 and planned to involve the Ministry of Education, the municipalities and local NGOs, apart from the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, UNICEF, the Canadian Red Cross and the Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank promised logistic, financial and institutional support to the initiative, under the condition that all the mentioned institutions will be involved. The project was designed to benefit at least 11,000 families in the Department of Madriz (see map).



Country map of Nicaragua indicating the Department of Madriz where the project was going to be implemented.

3. Developments

After approval of the project by the Lions Clubs Switzerland in July 2007, the SODIS Foundation started to push this initiative and to prepare the according agreements with local authorities. Informal approval was obtained from the Ministry of Health at Departmental level, but then several processes started to block the development of the activities:

- General elections brought a change of government, and at the same time a change of authorities. One of the main new policies of the new government is to reverse the decentralization process and to concentrate more power at central government.
- In this climate of general change, the municipal authorities were not willing to go ahead with the initiative in order to avoid any risk.
- The Ministry of Health at central level was not willing and/or not able to designate a responsible person for this project.

These processes hindered the further process of project preparation during the last months of 2007. The SODIS Foundation tried to make things move again at different level, but had to recognize that there was not enough political will at several levels to bring such a large project back on track.

4. Current situation

The project theoretically still is viable. However, given the weaknesses at strategic points, the SODIS Foundation recommends not to go ahead with this process. It is suggested to allocate the resources to another project.

5. Potential alternative: Project at the Atlantic Coast (Save the Children)

In replacement of the project with the Ministry of Health, the SODIS Foundation is proposing an alternative project. It would be implemented on the east of Nicaragua, in the "Autonomous Regions of the Northern Atlantic Coast" (Region Autónoma del Atlántico Norte, RAAN). This is a chronically neglected region of Nicaragua, in spite of high indices of child mortality, poverty and a generally low Human Development Index. This has to do with the fact that access to the zone from the capital Managua is only possible by airplane, and that a majority of the population lives in small, widespread communities. Furthermore, many indigenous people speak English rather than Spanish, making communication more difficult than in other parts of the country.

6. Project summary

Country	Nicaragua
Region	Madriz
Altitude	0-500 m.a.s.l.
Climate	Hot and humid
Typical water source	Wells, springs, rivers
Partner institution	Save the Children
Number of Families to be trained	11.000
Project costs to Lions (CHF)	49.500
Counterpart local partners (CHF)	82.000
Cost per family (CHF)	4,55

7. Project partners

The main partner of the proposed project is the NGO "Save the Children". This institution is the only NGO who has maintained itself in this zone of Nicaragua over the past 5 years. However, after hurricane "Felix" devastated some of the communities at the east coast of Nicaragua in fall 2007, dozens of NGOs came to this zone, all of them relying on the knowledge and experience of Save the Children.

Safe the Children is an international NGO working worldwide on the issues of health, education, basic services, agriculture and support of local productivity. Among its specialties is the promotion of safe drinking water. Due to the structure and geographic distribution of the area, they have been focusing on two technologies for household water treatment: filters and SODIS. Both these methods have the advantage that the materials needed only need to be purchased periodically.

Some staff of Safe the Children has been trained by the SODIS Foundation during a workshop in 2005 and during the post-emergency attention in 2007, and a plan for institutional strengthening in these topics was elaborated. This post-emergency activities will be the starting point of the proposed project, taking advantage of the situation and of the fact that third-party funding is available for some activities.



Water is essential for life – but on the east coast of Nicaragua, it's a scarce resource, and people have to walk a long way for washing, bathing or

8. Implementation strategy

Currently, several NGOs are present on the east coast of Nicaragua for rehabilitation activities after hurricane Felix. A common planning and coordination procedure is being set up, and institutions like UNICEF are supporting these activities financially. UNICEF also is financing a Water and Sanitation Rehabilitation Plan, which currently is being implemented by Safe the Children (with additional financial support from Save the Children Canada).

The general strategy of this project is to take advantage of the presence of several NGOs, under the leadership of Safe the Children, and of rehabilitation programs. These activities shall be extended and be turned into a prevention and preparation campaign for safe water and hygiene – unfortunately, "after the hurricane is before the hurricane", as a popular saying goes, indicating that these disasters have been occurring more and more frequently on the east coast of Nicaragua, with devastating effects. Thus, it is very important to prepare the next hurricane season, which starts in August – unless patterns change. The Ministry of Health will be involved from the beginning, and the proposed project shall be presented as a pilot initiative for disaster preparation.

9. Budget summary (all numbers in CHF)

Item	Total expenses	Financed by Lions Clubs	Financed by SODIS Foundation	Financed by local partner	In-kind Contribution of local population
Salaries	40.000	10.000	10.000	20.000	
Educational Materials	16.000	16.000			
Workshops	21.000	8.000		5.000	8.000
Local transport	13.000	8.000		5.000	
Water testing	4.000		4.000		
Training	3.500	2.500	1.000		
Monitoring and reporting	7.000	2.500	4.000		
Technical backstopping	2.000	2.000			
Household visits	25.000				25.000
Bank transfers	500	500			
TOTAL	131.500	49.500	19.000	30.000	33.000

Table: Project cost. Of the total project costs, CHF 49,500 will be financed by the Lions Clubs; the remaining amount will be covered (in cash or kind) by the SODIS Foundation, the Save the Children and by the local population. Numbers of local contributions are based on rough estimates.