



SPECIAL REPORT

Food Security: Women, Environment and Development in four Communities of Boaco, Nicaragua

I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Program:	Americas
Country Program:	Nicaragua
Project Number:	23-1608-02
Reporting Period:	July - December 2008
Project Holder:	Association for the Promotion and the Integral Community Development (ASPRODIC)

II. PROJECT PROFILE:

Women selected for this project have limited income and poor living conditions including lack of health services, education, housing, and proper nourishment. They live in the communities of Taswa, San Juan, Las Floridas and Saguatetepe in the Department of Boaco (88 km from Managua). 280 women have been selected for the Project. 70 of them will receive original resources and 210 will receive pass on the gift resources over a 5 year period. The main goal of the project is to improve women's and children's food security by providing them resources like cattle, chickens, sheep and swine to increase food availability and technical skills training to ensure adequate management of animal species. A side objective is to contribute to the conservation of natural resources and the environment by establishing and managing tree nurseries that will hold trees for lumber and fruit and providing resource management training. A total of 1050 chickens, 70 hens, 36 pelibuey sheep (30 female and 6 male), 34 heifers, 2 bulls, 86 swine (70 female and 16 male), 1470 trees for lumber (21 plants per participant), 1470 fruit trees (21 plants per participant) will be delivered through this project.

III. OVERVIEW – PROGRESS MADE ON OBJECTIVES

The Association for the Promotion and the Integral Community Development (ASPRODIC), a local NGO is a recognized entity in the rural sector due its performance, experience and geographic coverage. They have established alliances, with municipal authorities, public institutions, grassroots members and private companies, to achieve a positive impact in the transformation of the standard of living for families in their target groups. During this semester, besides continuing giving assistance to the families located in the four communities originally defined (Taswa, Saguatetepe, La Florida and San Juan), assistance has also been provided to the two new adjoining communities (Boaco Viejo and Cafén).

The community leaders have an important role since they have been carrying out the main project's activities, once they identified the high degree of vulnerability, food insecurity and environmental degradation in the area.

Before analyzing the advances in each one of the objectives, it is important to mention some of the aspects that have contributed to the progress and achievement of the objectives:

1. Two community promoters, who were trained by a previous HEIFER project, have been sharing what they have learned in animal welfare, health and reproduction to other families, in the communities of Taswa and Saguatepe.
2. Training is a strong project's component. Women from the communities of Saguatepe, Taswa, Boaco Viejo and Cafen have been trained and are applying their knowledge in swine management, with topics such as animal breeding, type of illness and treatment.
3. Heifer Nicaragua has developed a close relationship with ASPRODIC. Exchanges of experiences, including community members have been made to evaluate the project's performance, giving as a result the establishment of agreements for the areas of improvement.
4. Leadership in a grassroots level has been supported, promoting women's integration to the cooperative sector and in different economic initiatives.
5. In order to assure the passing on the gift, before the POG families received the resources, the quality of the animals was determined and the original families shared their knowledge according to the animal delivered. In this period 92 new families received 592 chickens and 17 sheep.

Internalizing Heifer's values has been very important toward achieving the results up to date.

The advances towards the project's objectives for the period July – December, 2008 are the following:

Objective No. 1:

Increase the nutritional levels of 280 families with the production and management of major and minor species.

This is one of the main project's goals, due to the extreme poverty of the area. The main advances are the following:

- According to the selection criteria established in agreement among the technical part and the participating women of the project 14 heifers and a young bull were delivered to the participants. Originally pure breed animals were considered however due to the type of conditions and management needed by these species, it was decided to have heritage cattle crossed with pure breeds resulting in a more resistant animal and with better adaptation to the conditions. This allowed us to acquire the animals at a lower price; therefore three more women were included in the project. We have

observed that the cows are in good condition and the ones that already have had offspring produce an average of 4 – 5 liters of milk; others produce up to six liters daily.

- We estimate that 60% of the families that received heifers are producing and including in their diet milk and by-products (cheese, curdled cheese, cream, sour milk, cottage cheese, etc.), also they are already exchanging and marketing the products in smaller scale. It is important to mention that the fact of purchasing pregnant animals (approximately 4- 8 months of gestation), has facilitated the early passing on the gift to other families.
- The women who received poultry are already consuming eggs and meat. The ones who have cows are producing milk and using part of surplus to make cheese for family consumption. This is a result of the good management given to animal resources due to the training and technical assistance the families had received.
- 14 more heifers and young bull were delivered.
- The good reproductive and productive management of the animal species and other productive resources are the most important advances that assure the project's sustainability. The strategy used has been the theoretical-practical events and the technical assistance provided.
- Finally, the technical support given by ASPRODIC has been important, since women have learned the importance of preventive animal health, which contributes to the economy by having a good production and reducing the purchase of medicines.

Objective No. 2:

Generate collective and individual capacities in 4 participating communities of the project, on major and minor species management as well as the environmental conservation

Regarding this objective, several learning processes have been developed as training events, chats, forum-debates, exchange of experiences, demonstrative field days, etc. This shows the interest of ASPRODIC and Heifer Project Nicaragua, to increase the families' capacities in terms of technical animal management. Also practices on soil and water conservation with an extensive agroecology focus have been reinforced to promote the environmental sustainability in the region they live.

In the last three years all the training plans have been implemented. ASPRODIC will continue monitoring the activities carried out each day by the women in order to achieve future successes and spreading Heifer's values with other families.

During this semester the training and exchange of experiences were regarding the animal management:

- 1 workshop on the main cattle and swine breeds and common illnesses.
- 1 Workshop on animal welfare.

- 1 training on adequate food preparation (concentrated animal feed).
 - 1 Workshop on management of registers / species/ food and first-aid kit.
 - 1 exchange to know the importance and management of these species.
- 1 Workshop on gender and leadership

In these activities 70 women members of the project participated, as well as other 70 people from communities nearby, 38 of which were women. In the workshops a total of five manuals regarding swine management were provided, technical assistance has been also given to the families.

The manuals are written in a simple way and are an important tool for their animal management and also to transfer their knowledge to the passing on the gift families.

Objective No. 3:

In the second year of the project, 80% of the participants have established forest and fruit trees in vulnerable zones in the communities of Taswa, San Juan, Las Floridas and Saguatope.

As it has been highlighted in previous reports, the results have surpassed the expectations. All the trainings in environmental topics have been given. Also the community has been educated in the promotion, protection and conservation of the environment. Among the advances are:

- 4 plant nurseries have been established and the forest plants were planted in the family productive units.
- With the technical assistance of ASPRODIC, the plants were established in the more adequate places.
- Plants were established in schools, river banks, waterfalls and in areas of the production within the production units.
- The participants recognize that planting a tree is giving an opportunity to the biodiversity of the area and reduce problems that are more common each year as droughts and floods.
- It is important to mention that the participating women of communities have carried out this activity with other projects that are also promoting reforestation, as in the case of San Juan and La Florida, where some women have cultivate organic coffee. In this project, it is required to plant trees within the coffee plot as a requirement to obtain an organic coffee certification.

Objective No. 4:

70% of the participants have improved their economic income with the selling in a small-scale sale of products and byproducts of the animal species provided.

Activities with organizations and local institutions that have more experience with commercialization have been developed as fairs and weekly rural markets.

The main advances are the following:

- The participating families have increased their income through the selling of eggs, milk and their byproducts, meat and other products, on a weekly or monthly basis.
- 100% of the chickens are producing, of which 80% is for consumption and new breeding and 20% for commercialization.
- 90% of the sheep are in the reproductive phase and 60% of the cattle produce milk for consumption.
- The commercialization of the products is carried out in a small-scale locally (in the community).
- Conversations with the organization COUBSA (United Communities of Boaco) has been carried out to carry out fairs as a group and to promote the products from the project.

IV. QUANTITATIVE DATA

By the end this semester (Jul.-Dec 08), two additional communities were added to the four original determined, 30 more families were included to the 70 families originally established.

In other terms:

- a) 14 heifers and a young bull were delivered to new original families, given a total of 31 heifers and 2 young bulls.
- b) 27 families headed by women were supported from 2 communities Cafen and Boaco Viejo with the delivery of construction materials for the farms: 250 sheets of zinc, 157 cement bags and 110 pounds of nails.
- c) Up to date the project has included 144 women.
- d) A total of 92 women (and their families) have been beneficiaries of the project through the "passing on the gift".
- e) 592 chickens and 17 sheep were delivered by the passing on the gift.
- f) Training: A total of six (6) Training Workshops were given to 70 women integrated in the project, as well as other 70 people from communities nearby, 38 of which were women.

V. TESTIMONIES / COMMENTS

A journal article was published by a National Newspaper "La Prensa" on November 10, 2008:

An article in La Prensa, on the page of regional news, mentions the passing on the gift of species in the community of San Juan, to other communities in order to achieve one of the goals to include more participants in the Project of Food Security.

More information is available in the following link:

<http://www.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2008/noviembre/10/noticias/nacionales//>



Women Benefited in a Productive Program.

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Unlike the productive bonus given by the Government, the **Project Food Security: Woman, Environment and Development**, has begun to give its first results, with the delivery of chickens to communities of Boaco, benefiting more than 200 women.

Since this week, the first seventy participants of the project began the passing on the gift to other communities of the municipality: San Buena Ventura and Cafen, giving the opportunity to other women to improve their children's diet and the economy of their families, through the sale of eggs and chickens.



Most of the women are happy with the support given by both organizations (Heifer and Asprodic), in which each one of them received 15 chickens and a rooster, in order to improve the family's economy.

The program considers as a way of compensation, to replace or to return the same amount of chickens, to benefit new beneficiaries from other communities.



TESTIMONY:

- Martha Saavedra (promoter): Community Cafen
- Has received during the project:
- One pregnant cow
- One longhair sheep
- 18 chickens
- Construction Material to build a pig pen (12 sheets of zinc, 4.6 pounds of nails, 7 cement bags).
- Training and Exchange of experiences



First we should give thanks to God, then ASPRODIC and Heifer by the support that they are giving to us. The project is something very interesting since us, women from the community of Cafen, are already supporting a group of another community. As they say in the workshops, this project has to grow, not only be in a single place.

Therefore, I think others should do the passing on the gift and establish goals, try to do the things as Heifer indicates them, with solidarity and sharing the resources.

VI. NEXT STEPS

To date the project has been implemented according to the planning, with a successful methodology in the six communities (including the two new adjoined). In general, the project has introduced changes in the technical management of the different project's components, and fostering the women's leading role in their reproductive and productive activity.

The methodology included exchanges of experience and the learning by doing (teach by promoters). This allows us to state the project's sustainability, since the resources received have an adequate management, and that the passing on the gift is taking place.

Since there is a shared challenge between the ASPRODIC Heifer Project teams, to strengthen the continuity and productive management project's resources, during the following month's the following activities will be carried out:

1. Develop the suitable mechanisms, shared with the families, to identify and include new women participants through the passing on the gift. Group meetings and personalized visits will take place in order to assure the selection based on the principles of "genuine need and justice."
2. Strengthen the participant's capacities in management and animal welfare. Topics regarding animal health, reproductive management in major and minor species will be given, through technical assistance (Individual and collective).

3. Technicians of ASPRODIC and Heifer Nicaragua will foster that the participants put in practice the techniques learned in their plots the forest and fruit trees, based on the training plans.
4. Establish alliances with private and public development organizations working in the area, which have experience in the topic of commercialization.
5. Both teams, ASPRODIC and Heifer, will continue carrying out meetings to improve the monitoring, control and evaluation of the different project's components.
6. Strengthen the commercialization process among the participating families to guarantee the know-how and abilities through training and exchanges of experiences (with other communities and similar projects).