

USAID/El Salvador Water Concept Paper

In USAID/El Salvador's Strategic Plan, approved in June 1996, the Mission highlighted the serious state of the environment in El Salvador. The Strategic Plan articulated a results framework that would partially address the environmental problems of El Salvador, but more importantly would raise Salvadorans' awareness of environmental issues and knowledge about solutions.

To achieve these results, the Mission requested \$5 million in FY 1997 and \$6 million per year thereafter. During the review of the new strategy and in subsequent budget processes, the Mission stated that the funding level requested for the environment SO was the minimum necessary to achieve the results articulated in the results framework. Nonetheless, the environment SO's budget was cut to \$3.7 million and \$3.4 million in FY 1997 and FY 1998, respectively. While these funding levels are not insignificant relative to levels available to other missions, they are not sufficient to achieve the results articulated in the results framework.

Despite these budget cuts, along with significant staffing reductions, the Mission still maintains that USAID must continue to play a role in addressing El Salvador's serious environmental problems. With reduced resources available, however, the Mission must focus its efforts more narrowly. The Mission concluded that the logical focus should be on water, with a continued geographic focus in selected areas for maximum impact of USAID's assistance and as a demonstration of what could be done.

The lack of clean water--both shortage of water supplies year round and the contamination of existing sources--is the most critical environment challenge in El Salvador and is a major obstacle to the country's long-term sustainable development and stability. The need for access to clean water is also among the highest priorities for the Mission's customers: poor, rural Salvadorans, particularly women and youth.

The Mission's intent to focus its environmental activities on improving access to clean water, in selected areas, is still a major task. Water supply sources must be protected to ensure an adequate year-round flow. Water quality must be improved to tolerable levels. Delivery systems must be improved and maintained to improve and sustain access to distribution points and to minimize wastage.

By focusing on water under the environmental strategic objective, the Mission recognized the opportunity to leverage greater resources and impact through a coordinated approach to addressing water issues across all the strategic objectives. In fact, the mission is proposing to develop a strategic objective that

encompasses the water-related activities of the other strategic objectives, complemented by critical environment activities funded by the environment SO. The impact of those activities related to the other SOs would be reported by those SOs, while the impact on water would be reported under the environment SO.

This cross-cutting strategic objective, **increased access to clean water**, will be achieved through three (illustrative) intermediate results:

IR#1 -- Sustainable Water Delivery Systems

This intermediate result focuses on the need for improved and sustainable distribution systems, whether wells, hand-operated water pumps or municipal water distribution systems. Achieving this intermediate result entails improving infrastructure, and developing maintenance and cost-recovery systems.

This intermediate result will be addressed by activities in three strategic objectives. Under the democracy SO, USAID is working with selected municipalities to strengthen their capacity to deliver water to their communities. This includes the construction of water systems, strengthening of management capacity and implementation of meter-based cost-recovery systems. A new activity under the health SO is specifically targeted at reducing infant and child mortality through improved access to clean water. The activity will finance small, rural water systems and the establishment of participative water committees to govern the use and maintenance of those systems. The environment SO complements these efforts with technical assistance in environmental policy to enable these municipalities and communities to lay a legal and policy foundation to make their water systems sustainable.

IR#2 -- Increased Demand for Clean Water

To increase access to clean water there needs to be an increase in effective demand. This is achieved through increased awareness of the degree of contamination in the water and its harmful effects on human health, along with participative mechanisms for citizens to demand change.

USAID/El Salvador's health education programs and nationwide environmental education campaigns, combined with the new USAID-financed K-6 educational curricula that include environmental themes, are increasing citizen understanding of the importance of clean water. The economic growth SO's efforts to increase the production of non-traditional, high-value crops will increase demand for clean agricultural water. The Mission will look for ways to ensure that these education activities complement and re-enforce each other.

The democracy SO will continue to work with municipalities to

increase citizen participation in decision-making regarding the delivery of services.

IR#3 -- Sustainable Availability of Clean Water

The sustainable availability of clean water depends on the protection of the sources of water, and the reduction of contaminating practices.

All of the SOs have activities aimed at reducing water contamination. The economic strategic objective is working to strengthen producer associations with an emphasis on organic production of vegetables and coffee. The use of organic production methods significantly reduces the amount of pesticides entering the environment, effectively lessening surface water pollution. The democracy SO is already working with selected municipalities on wastewater treatment, and proper disposal of solid waste. Environment funds will complement these efforts by providing low-cost technical solutions to the proper handling of sewage and garbage generated by communities which will improve the availability of clean water downstream. Environment funds may also be used to assist selected industries to identify methods for reducing their contamination of water.

Environment funds will be needed to continue, and replicate, successfully demonstrated methods of reforestation and agroforestry which ensure that rainwater infiltrates slowly and recharges the underground aquifers that supply the water for small water systems.