

**Evaluation of USAID's Assistance to
Nicaraguan Civil Society**
Final Report –August 2010

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AJONA	Youth Association of Mateare
AMM-Chinandega	Women Association/ Movement of Chinandega
AOTR	Agreement Officer's Technical Representative
ASODEL	Association for Survival and Local Development
CAMM	Centro de Apoyo a las Misiones
CC Managua	Civil Coordinator Managua
CC LEÓN	Civil Coordinator-León
CDC	Center for Constitutional Rights
CENIDH	Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights
CINCO	Communications Research Center
CIVICUS	CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CODENI	National Coordinator of Nicaraguan NGOs that work for Children and Adolescent Populations
COP	Chief of Party
CPC'S	Citizen Power Councils –Citizen Participation Committees
CPDH	Permanent Commission on Human Rights
CPMEN	Permanent Congress of Business Women
CSE	Supreme Electoral Council
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DCHA	Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DFIT	Department For International Development
DG	Democracy and Governance
FES	Esquipulas Foundation
FMN	Foundation Movement for Nicaragua
FNN	Foundation Nicaragua Nuestra
FOG	Fixed Obligation Grants
FSLN	National Liberation Front
FUNDESER	Foundation for the Socioeconomic Rural Development
FUPADE	Foundation for Development
HADEMOS	Let's Make Democracy
HD	Let's Make Democracy
ICNL	International Center NonProfit Law
IEEPP	Institute for Strategic Studies and Public Policies
INGES	Research and Social Processes Institute
INCEJU	Nicaraguan Institute and Study Center for Youth
IPADE	Institute for Development and Democracy
ISP	Institutional Strengthening Program
KEPA	For a Just World (Finnish NGO)
MjN	Nicaragüita Youth Movement
MSI	Management Systems International
NDI	National Democratic Institute

PEN	International Novelist and Writers
PLC	Liberal Constitutionalist Party
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PROJUSTICIA	For Justice Group
RED LOCAL	Nicaragua Network for Democracy and Local Development
SFP	Supportive Framework Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

Civil society (CS) in Nicaragua has gained important ground in the last three decades and developed skills and credibility that will permit it to play an important role in the current political context, including a mediating role that proactively seeks peaceful solutions and ways to be inclusive; promoting dialogue to seek solutions based on common values; and defending democratic institutions that are increasingly valued by citizens. Nevertheless, the sector still exhibits weaknesses that threaten its ability to effectively fulfill its potential, including being fragmented, divided, with leadership and internal capacity problems. International donors, including USAID, have been major supporters of civil society organizations (CSOs) and have contributed to their development. It is important that this support continues during this challenging time, as CSOs adjust themselves to a new political reality and struggle through a time of crisis to maintain the spaces for action they have built over the years.

This evaluation seeks to provide a better understanding of civil society today and offers recommendations on how better support the sector. It also responds to key questions regarding the responsiveness of two USAID program activities to civil society needs which currently support CSOs through two separate cooperative agreements under a Leader with Associates Agreement held by the Academy for Educational Development (AED). The Institutional Strengthening Program (ISP) implemented by AED/MSI focuses on organizational development and the Supportive Framework for Civil Society (SFP) implemented by AED/ICNL focuses on improving the legal framework for CSOs.

General Status of Civil Society. The majority of civil society leaders, key informants and stakeholders agreed that Nicaraguan civil society is in a crisis, struggling to survive and redefine itself in an adverse and highly political environment that offers ever smaller opportunities for action. Participating CSOs used “fragmented, polarized, under siege, and attacked” to describe the civil society today. CSOs also noted that their environment is one where it is very difficult to create spaces for joint action; where there are restrictions of association; where a new parallel model of civil society has replaced many of them; where their legitimacy and credibility is at risk; and where there is no respect for the rule of law. For organizations that have an advocacy or rights focus it is especially difficult to operate in this environment. They feel alienated, threatened and at risk of losing their identity. The majority described a precarious economic situation, with few funds available.

Nevertheless, some civil society leaders are taking using this time for building stronger alliances among CSOs, revisiting their mission, and assessing their relationships with their stakeholders. In contrast, some CSOs operating in other sectors have found fertile ground in which to work; examples are those in the agricultural and local development areas.

Civil Society needs. When asked to identify civil society needs, CSOs and key informants identified financial resources as the most urgent need. Leadership renewal and the need for internal organizational improvements, developing transparent financial systems and becoming more professional and specialized as organizations were also identified as important. Improving skills in strategic communications and the need to maintain CSOs presence and visibility in the media was a common area of need.

CSOs also highlighted the need to build alliances and networks, both nationally and internationally, as a way to strengthen their internal and external activities. Key informants identified as a top priority the need to develop opportunities for consensus building and avoid violence and further polarization. Civil society needs have the ability to educate citizens

in and build public awareness on democratic values and processes, organize citizens in favor of the defense of rights, and promote the renovation of political parties.

USAID responsiveness to CS needs. Based on evaluation results it is clear that the two activities are well grounded in the civil society arena and that they respond to relevant civil society needs. Both programs are especially important time given the current political environment and the vulnerability of CSOs in this context. The ISP responds to CSOs need to internally strengthen their organizational capacity and clarify its identity. Issues of governance, strategic plans, clear communications and having required documentation are especially relevant. The SFP program responds to the importance of defending the freedom of association right that is being threatened and to civil society's and the legal community's need to deepen the knowledge and practice of this basic right.

The **Institutional Strengthening Program** is well on its way to meeting its objectives. Several CSOs reported notable achievements in their organizational development process among them are: actualized strategic plans, better functioning board of directors, clear mission and organizational goals, and improved internal and external communications. There are examples of CSOs that have obtained financial resources with support from ISP. These results are due to the high quality of technical assistance which has generated a demand for services that the program sometimes finds difficult to meet. This is further complicated by having key staff that travels regularly in and out of the country. The program did not adjust its structure in spite of growing significantly in size and scope. Grants are valued by CSOs, but the mechanism used, which is based on reimbursement, places additional pressures on CSOs that already face financial difficulties.

Recommendations. Key recommendations for the ISP include:

Timeframe. Expand the program through August 2012 as organizational development responds to CSO needs, was rated as high in importance by the majority of CSOs, and the program plays a critical role in sustaining civil society in a challenging political context.

Program Strategy.

- ✓ Maintain program strategy with its focus on organizational development, especially communication strategies through technical assistance, workshops and grants.
- ✓ Seek program sustainability by developing local capacity in institutional strengthening.
- ✓ Increase opportunities for CSOs to share their best practices with each other as a way to generate solutions to common problems and promote networking.
- ✓ Strengthen the area of developing institutional communication strategies and formulating better communication messages.
- ✓ Facilitate linkages to other resources to respond to CSOs needs beyond the scope of the ISP and promote increased sharing of best practices and networking.

If expansion is possible new activities could include increased training opportunities in resource development, fundraising, financial accounting systems and program design.

Program Structure. Adjust program structure to better respond to program needs and size and improve integration among its components; find alternatives to FOGs that better responds to the financial reality of Nicaraguan CSOs need to be identified to reduce financial burden on CSOs; continue to improve the integration between grants and the technical components and its staff.

The **Supportive Framework for Civil Society** has been effective in mobilizing civil society against the Manual which threatened to limit CSOs ability to receive funding and has demonstrated its ability to serve as an early warning system with capacity for quick response. The SFP carefully selected CSOs and helped them coalesce into a capable de facto coalition. It

has used grants creatively and CSOs have used them to serve as multipliers of their knowledge and to raise awareness on the importance of freedom of association. The program influenced public opinion and the National Assembly and created critical legal knowledge and expertise among lawyers, civil society leaders and CSOs. The International Conference succeeded in building awareness of successful solutions to similar problems facing Nicaraguan civil society and in promoting international linkages and networks.

Recommendations. The key recommendations for the SFP program include:

Timeframe. Expand the program's time period extends the program through March 2012, beyond the election period and sufficiently enough to build CSO capacity to place freedom of association as a right that is understood and recognized by citizens as an important value.

Program Strategy.

- ✓ Maintain program strategy with its key activities: training, research, small grants and conferences.
- ✓ Expand stakeholders to include judicial actors. Look for ways to educate, inform and elicit the interest of judicial authorities.
- ✓ Continue to promote networking and alliances, and promote linkages with national and international organizations. During times of vulnerability and crisis, international relationships among CSOs are especially important and the international conference was especially so.

If expansion is possible new activities could include: providing legal assistance to those CSOs that have encountered problems; publications that can be understood by the general public on the freedom of association rights; a database that accumulates relevant information of program network, participants and tools developed by the CSOs; and a university curriculum that consolidates the issue in Nicaraguan Law Schools.

Nicaraguan Civil Society. Key recommendations for civil society in general include:

- ✓ **Maintain the current focus on strengthening civil society organizations.** Given the political environment and the threats to democratic values and institutions, it is critical for USAID to maintain its support for Nicaraguan CSOs. Continue with the focus on youth.
- ✓ **Public arena** - Produce a study that identifies and shows the value and clear contributions of civil society towards meeting citizen's needs, include the value added contribution of the DG CSOs. Bring into the programs organizations that serve to meet social needs and are less of a political target. – health, education, and agriculture CSOs. Work with CSOs that are distributed geographically across the country.
- ✓ **Alliances.** International donors such as USAID should explore collaborative efforts with other donors and encourage grantees to diversify their funding for program activities. Take this opportunity to built a new public plural imagine.
- ✓ **Renovation of CSO Leadership.** Findings indicate a need for democratic civil society leaders. Programs and activities that help identify and train new leaders will contribute to this renovation.
- ✓ **International Sphere.** It is vital to support Nicaraguan CSOs develop international relations and linkages. During times of vulnerability and crisis, international relationships and linkages among CSOs are especially important
- ✓ **Risk Assessment.** In order for CSOs to successfully navigating the risks faced at this time, they will need to continuously gauge the environment, assess the risks, identify possible scenarios and make adjustments to stay on-course and to avoid problems. USAID can help provide CSOs with technical assistance to increase CSOs capacity in this area.

Evaluation of USAID's Assistance to Nicaraguan Civil Society

A. Purpose of the Evaluation and Statement of the Key Questions to be Answered

1. Overview

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide USAID with background information and analysis to help make management decisions about how to best support civil society in a changing and difficult political environment.

A major focus of the evaluation is to provide an analysis on whether, when, and how best to continue two types of support currently being provided to Nicaraguan civil society organizations through two separate cooperative agreements under a Leader with Associates agreement held by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) managed by the DCHA/Democracy Office in USAID/Washington. These activities are:

- **Institutional Strengthening Program (ISP)** implemented by AED/MSI focuses on organizational development and targets 30 CSOs; it is scheduled to end on August 30, 2011.
- **Supportive Framework for Civil Society (SFP)** implemented by AED/ICNL focuses on improving the legal framework for CSOs; it is currently scheduled to end on September 30, 2010. USAID is considering extending the end date of this task order.

2. Key Questions

Towards this end, USAID provided the following Key Questions as guidance for the evaluation to respond:

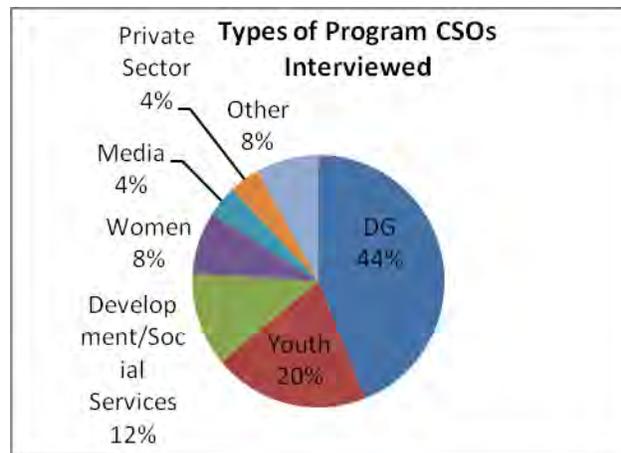
1. What is the general status of civil society in Nicaragua? Can it be categorized in subgroups? If so, what are the typical organizations in each category? What are the key "organizational development" and "supportive framework" needs of Nicaraguan civil society organizations (CSOs), collectively or individually? To what extent are the current task orders addressing these needs?
2. What are the views of local civil society about whether these two activities are relevant to them? Do civil society partners believe they should be implemented in different ways?
3. To what extent are the two activities effective in achieving their overarching objectives and results? Is there a reasonable expectation of achieving sustainable results by the established ending dates? Are there changes in focus that should be made under the existing activities or in follow-on civil society assistance?
4. How do the civil society partners and beneficiaries of these programs interact with the broader political and governmental environment? And how are they affected by it? Is there any significant risk that the timing of key assistance dates (e.g., when the task order ends, is extended, or a follow-on mechanism is competed) in relation to planned elections would jeopardize achieving objectives?

The document incorporates the detailed outline suggested by USAID and the recommendations made to the Mission on its draft report. The four main Evaluation Key Questions have been divided into sub-questions and these are answered in different sections. These are tagged as sub-questions throughout the document to facilitate their tracking. Please see Annex 1 for USAID Guidance to Evaluation.

3. Evaluation Design and Methodology

The evaluation was designed to respond to the key questions provided by USAID/Nicaragua within the time and human resources provided for the activity. Data collection included the following components:

- Document review of program documents, literature and studies on civil society and Nicaragua and USAID documentation
- Interviews – a total of 62 interviews were held
 - a. Briefings with USAID DG representatives
- Interviews with representatives and staff of implementing organizations
- Interviews with CSOs staff or board members
- Interviews with key informants – this included sector representatives of churches, universities, other donors, media, business and associations. This group also includes key civil society leaders who provided important insights on the current situation.
- Interviews with a sample comparison group of five organizations that have not received assistance or participated in the program.
- Group Discussions – a separate group discussion took place with representatives of each program to identify lessons learned and recommendations using an appreciative inquiry methodology.



Twenty-five participating organizations were interviewed. The distribution by category is shown in the graph.

See Annex 3 to see the Interview Guide and Annex 7 for the Interview list. For a more detailed description of the evaluation design and timeline, please see Annex 2.

B. Civil Society in Nicaragua

Civil Society is the sphere in which citizens voluntarily organize themselves to pursue the common good. Its importance resides in the fact that it is the space where every citizen can voluntarily and freely participate to pursue their individual interest.

USAID defines civil society as the independent, non-governmental realm of citizen activity and sees it as crucial in ensuring citizen participation, association and expression in a democracy. Similarly, the World Bank uses the term civil society to refer to “the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and value of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations and foundations”¹

A vibrant civil society is essential in all democracies, and is especially so in countries transitioning to a democracy. Civil society as a whole is usually charged with the mission of holding governments accountable to respect and promote the most important values of democracy and has as its goal to build a democratic system with strong institutions and an equally strong civil society. It functions at its best in well consolidated and mature democracies, where checks and balances are in effect.

To understand the current status of civil society in Nicaragua, it is helpful to understand its development through the last three decades. When the FSLN came to power in 1979, it promoted the creation of its own civil society organizations which served as a base from which to institute its agenda. When it lost the presidency to Violeta Chamorro in 1990, many of the Sandinista leaders and thinkers founded new NGOs as a way to remain active and relevant in the new political environment. This sudden growth in new legal personalities can be seen by the number of CSO registered by the government which went from less than 100 in 1980 (of which 80% were evangelical) to 400 by 1996². The following decade sees the rise of new NGO’s with different ideologies and purposes who receive strong support from international donors. Today there are a large number of CSOs registered by the government (3,500-4,000³) of which 560 meet the criteria of an NGO, as developed by a Civicus study⁴. On their return to power, the Sandinista party has instituted a new model of civil society organization with its *Consejos de Participación Ciudadana* (CPC) through which it seeks to consolidate a base of support at the local level to promote its new agenda.

Interviews with a wide sector of civil society organizations, key informants and international cooperation representatives served to better understand how this environment is currently affecting civil society and how these organizations are interacting with the broader political and government environment. Respondents were asked to provide an assessment of the sector and to identify its needs. These questions generated a complex and disturbing picture of the current state of civil society in Nicaragua and the difficult environment they are currently operating in.

¹ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/>

² Interviews with CDC July 6 and Fundación Nicaragua Nuestra June 30, 2010

³ CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation - Civil Society Index Nicaragua. Preliminary Results. Red Nicaraguense para la Democracia y el Desarrollo Local. Nacional Workshop Managua; May 20; 2010

⁴Ibid

1. Civil Society - Categories

Sub-question: *Can it be categorized in subgroups? If so, what are the typical organizations in each category?*

Civil society leaders and key informants were asked to describe how they believed Nicaraguan civil society is organized. Their responses were a clear reflection of their views of how the environment affected their organization. As can be expected, respondents also classified civil society organizations based on the arena in which they work. The following are some of the most common categories given during the interviews:

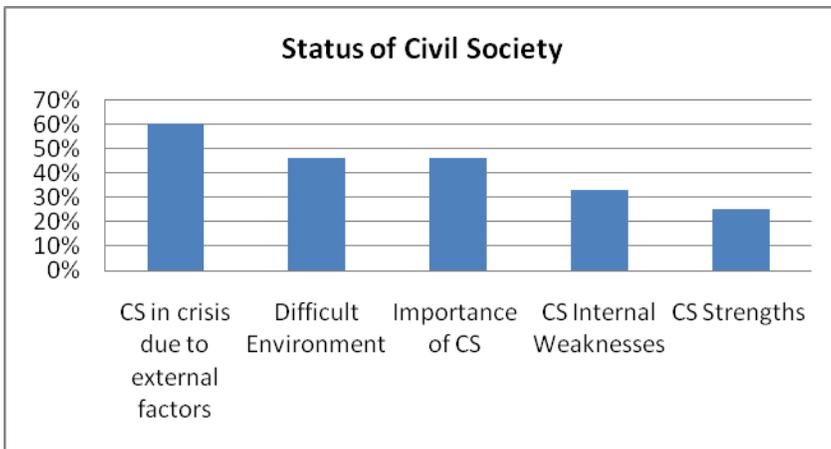
- Responding to social needs or promoting democracy. One of the distributions mentioned with high frequency is the one that separates the organizations that have a social focus from ones that are dedicated to the promotion of democracy and its essence is citizen participation.
- Political - CSO against or pro-government. For some the important division under current circumstances is political between those CSOs that support the government and those who do not. They indicated that within the group that does not support the current government there is a group that might not necessarily be against the government but has been classified as such. It is important to remember that this is a perception which under very polarized political societies is based on minimal analysis.
- Wealth and mobilization capacity – CSOs with high resources but low capacity to mobilize support, mid-level resources where most NGOs, many with political ties, and low resources but with high capacity to mobilize support).
- Sector - by type of activity (assistance, community development, political incidence, research).
- Geographic – by coverage (national, regional or local presence).
- Complexity of their work (outreach, service, incidence, research, public policy).

As can be expected, many of the organizations who work in promoting democratic processes saw themselves in the first category and those organizations that provided more services or acted at a more local level were more likely to view the sector through different perspectives. Several of those interviewed indicated that the main group of CSOs is composed by those that provide social services and can mostly function without frictions with the government. Of note, youth organizations added categories of their own, such as: out of fashion, emerging with potential, and “more of the same” for describing new CSOs that are currently replacing others but don’t have potential. These different viewpoints also influenced their perception of the current state and the needs of civil society as a whole, although some areas of general agreement were detected.

2. General Status of Civil Society in Nicaragua - Conclusions

Sub-question: *What is the general status of Civil Society in Nicaragua?*

Sub-question: *How do the civil society partners and beneficiaries of these programs interact with the broader political and governmental environment? And how are they affected by it?*



Interviews with a broad number of civil society leaders revealed that Nicaraguan civil society is in a crisis, struggling to survive and redefine itself in a changing and highly political environment that offers ever smaller opportunities for action. Over 60% of CSOs participating in the two activities being evaluated expressed a sense of profound crisis. They used “fragmented, polarized, under siege, attacked” to describe the situation.

The second most common theme identified was the difficult environment civil society finds itself in; one where it is very difficult to create spaces for joint action, there are restrictions in association; where a new parallel model of civil society is in place; and where there is no respect for the rule of law. For organizations that have an advocacy or rights focus that often find themselves in the role of raising a critical voice to government activities it is especially difficult to operate in this environment. They feel alienated, threatened and at risk of losing their identity. When data was disaggregated by these CSO’s (DG), 100% described civil society as living in a crisis. Interestingly, DG CSOs were also the least likely (18%) to mention civil society weaknesses in their interviews while a majority of youth CSOs (60%) did. Youth organizations did not focus as much on the difficult environment, focusing instead on the importance of the role civil society plays in general. The comparative organization group responded with similar assessments regarding the precarious state of civil society; with comparative group CSOs working at the rural levels highlighting their ability to work with the government constructively. Key informants also highlighted the need for CSOs to renew and depoliticize their leadership and praised the efforts they see in forming new alliances among themselves. Key findings from these interviews are presented below.

External factors that contribute to this portrait include:

- 1. A large number of organizations described the current environment as increasingly polarized and politicized.** Organizations that are seeking to remain neutral are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. Government has adopted an “if you are not for us you are against us” attitude.
- 2. Continuous public attacks and intimidation.** Many of them, especially those in the DG sector, described the environment as one of intimidation and public attack that seeks to reduce their legitimacy and credibility. This is damaging one of the most precious assets civil society has: citizen confidence and credibility. Most of the respondents showed a great concern about the manner and the quick categorization used by government authorities when referring to civil society organizations and the tools and methods by which some of them have been attacked. Donors have felt pressure to fund or not fund certain organizations, affecting those on the “black list” and, on the other hand, to support a “white list” of pro-government organizations.

3. **Loss of spaces for action.** Organizations described having continuously smaller spaces for action. The government's support for the CPCs is creating a new model of citizen participation. As the government promotes the CPC's as the legitimate spaces for civil society participation, this parallel system creates disorientation and tensions among traditional CSOs, especially those that are not seen as supportive of government actions. Most importantly, as CPCs have rapidly established themselves at the local level and have left a number of NGOs without the customers, beneficiaries, or government authorities they need in order to do their work and with no possibilities for advocacy or policy negotiation.
4. **A lack of identity** as growing concern in many Nicaraguan CSOs interviewed. This attribute relates especially to those organizations that have promoted citizen participation using the regulatory frameworks provided by laws that specifically opened spaces for organized citizen participation. It is important to mention that lack of identity is a problem that affects the core abilities of civil society organizations as it affects all its capacities, its decision making process, its leadership and places the organization under the challenge of reinventing and adjusting itself under pressure.
5. **Administrative and taxation barriers** have been used to delay or impede CSOs who are seen against government, including the granting of legal personalities, approval of financial reports and demanding of paperwork not called for in current regulations. CSOs which are still working to obtain their legal personality are having difficulties due to the political nature of the process. This also applies to completing other administrative procedures.
6. **Weakened political parties.** Respondents also referred to the profound crisis within political parties which has impeded an effective counterbalance to the government. With weak political parties, civil society is playing an increasingly important role in defending the constitution and the rule of law nationally and locally. A national survey indicated that a large portion of respondents did not see themselves represented by any of the parties.
7. **Women organizations.** Several women's organizations have found themselves portrayed as opposing the government due to their support to the case of Zoilamerica and their fight to regain the right of women to therapeutic abortion. Interviewees describe numerous cases of loss of access to the municipal arena and intimidation to local women's groups who cooperate with them.

In addition, there are internal aspects that complete the picture of CSOs situation in Nicaragua:

8. **Precarious economic situation.** Many CSOs described a precarious economic situation, with reduced levels of funding available and fewer donors. Many of the organizations interviewed and key informants noted that CSOs, mostly those in the DG and human rights areas are barely surviving due to reductions in support from international donors. In the case of USAID programs, 2009 sees important programs ending, including those in Anti-corruption and Rule of Law which provided support to several of these organizations. In addition, some European donors left or have refocused their actions away from citizen participation. The Manual that tried to limit CSOs ability to receive international funding is another example of government efforts to limit CSOs capacity for action.

9. Internal weaknesses. CSOs are a microcosm of Nicaraguan society and in many cases reflect the political tendencies found in the environment. Many political leaders migrated to the sector with personal goals and objectives compromising the independence and autonomy of the sector. Some CSOs are not democratic, inclusive or transparent in their internal operations. Key informants identified these weaknesses as important to correct.

10. Fragmented. A common adjective used to describe civil society was that it was fragmented, disordered, divided and ineffective. Respondents noted that it had lost its vision and needed to regain its focus on its objectives. The competition for scarce resources contributes to each organization acting in isolation to obtain donor support.

Some civil society leaders also identified positive aspects of the current situation.

- **Strong capacities.** CSOs highlighted the fact that under this turmoil their voices and actions have been able to promote respect for human rights, for democratic institutions, and the constitution. Many of these organizations have acquired skills and capacity over the past years and are able to effectively reach out to the public and the media. CSO's leaders pointed to the Civicus survey where CSOs credibility is high, fourth on the list.
- **Alliances and networking.** Some of them acknowledge that the current crisis has served to bring them together and seek ways to work together, although reflecting that their voice and actions are weak compared to the actual need. CSO initiative to promote primary elections within the opposition political parties to help identify new leadership and strengthen democratic practices and values is an example of these types of efforts. As a result, CSOs interviewed are searching ways to create alliances among themselves, are revisiting their vision and mission to adjust to the new paradigm, and are developing new strategies through which to achieve their objectives.

Other sectors. Interviews with key informant of other sectors, including private, faith-based and community service organizations revealed that these organizations are operating under fewer pressures and are seeking strategies to enable them to continue with their work. Some of them, as in the agriculture sector have found a fertile ground in which to seek for new laws that benefit their sector and have been successful. Community development organizations have been able to operate and find increased support for poverty alleviation efforts and a more responsive environment. In some cases, donors have found the same situation, where the direct linkage between the local to the regional and national levels have resulted in improved responsiveness to their development efforts. But in all cases, they do find that a more political environment predominates at all levels and with it, the dangers of exclusion due to political affiliation increase.

The microfinance sector has also been affected in the last few years by changes in regulations introduced by the Ortega administration. According to interviewees, the government perceives that microfinance organizations should provide low interest loans to their clients. To this effect the government has instituted laws that place a maximum interest rate and another one that makes it a crime with four years jail time to charge that rate. In addition, this year a new law passed that forces microfinance entities to restructure loans if requested by clients. Microfinance organizations hope to improve the legal framework in which they operate through a new law that regulates them and is currently under development and, they hope, will be approved in August.

It is important to note that there are a good number of current studies available on the state of Nicaragua civil society. These studies support the findings of our assessment and go beyond it to provide a broader analysis of the current situation of the Nicaraguan civil society. Some notable ones include:

CIVICUS, in its world-wide publication “Depoliticizing Civic Space in Nicaragua” identified the following difficulties civil society is facing in the current political environment:

- Reports have emerged of motivated prosecutions against dissenting activists;
- The marginalization of organizations advocating for greater accountability and government oversight;
- Harassment of media groups;
- Directing of federal funds away from independent civil society organizations; and
- The implementation of a draft law on international cooperation, which places restrictions on local CSOs that promote citizen participation and government oversight accessing support from abroad.

NDI reported that its survey, “found that citizen confidence in key representative institutions, particularly the Supreme Electoral Council (*Consejo Supremo Electoral*, CSE), the presidency, the National Assembly and political parties, dropped an average of almost 20 points from 2007 to 2009.” Their analysis attribute this crisis in confidence to the 2008 municipal election process and to the nearly 10-year “pacto” between governing Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, FSLN) and the Liberal Constitutionalist Party (*Partido Liberal Constitucionalista*, PLC), which has politicized electoral and judicial authorities. In addition, the NDI/IPADE survey also found, “that a substantial portion of eligible citizens are prevented from voting because they face institutional barriers, such as the lack of national identification cards. Four out of 10 citizens in the survey reported they did not vote for that reason.”⁵

The Civil Society Index⁶, which seeks to learn about and support civil society globally supported a study in Nicaragua implemented by La Red Nicaraguense por la Democracia y el Desarrollo Local. The study was presented to the public on May 20, 2010 and included the following results:

- Forty percent of a sample of 141 participating in the study reported to have suffered some kind of an illegal restriction imposed by the central government, and 30% reported to have suffered illegal restriction imposed by a local level government;
- The study reports the lack of self-financing and the lack of external funds as one of the main weaknesses of the Nicaraguan civil society; and
- Another important finding is the reproduction of a political culture of leadership and individual leadership as a weakness in Nicaraguan CSOs.

⁵ Nicaragua 2009 Democracy Survey: Sharp Drop in Confidence in Public Institutions, NDI August 2009

⁶ CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation - Civil Society Index Nicaragua. Preliminary Results. Red Nicaraguense para la Democracia y el Desarrollo Local. Taller Nacional Managua; Mayo 20; 2010 .

INGES, KEPA, DFIT, CENIDH and Save the Children produced a study⁷ that reviewed government-civil society relations under the current context. The study makes an effort to identify the basic elements of the tensions that exist between them. The study points out that the conflict and disqualification of the government towards CSOs is mostly with the advocacy and social monitoring CSOs. The government claims that they are not representative and their political activism is leading them to play the role of an opposition political party.⁸ The study foresees that given the electoral moment, the polarization may open spaces for possible collaboration between the two, but only after the election results are in.

3. Civil Society – identifying current needs

Sub-question: *What are the key “organizational development” and “supportive framework” needs of Nicaraguan civil society organizations (CSOs), collectively or individually?*

When asked to identify civil society needs, participating organizations and key informants highlighted the following needs:

- **Resources.** The most prevalent need identified was the urgent need for financial resources and the capacity to mobilize them. Some of organizations are considering closing their offices in the coming months or are closing important components. Even though the lack of financial resources affects many CSO's, some indicated that they are doing everything possible to continue their activities and adjust to the new reality. Some are developing new strategies to market their services and develop new sources of income.
- **New leadership.** Respondents indicated that there is an urgent need for new leaders with a new vision and skills to correctly read the political environment in which civil society evolves. Leaders who are sensitive to the needs of citizens, practice democratic values and who do not have a partisan background are needed.
- **Stronger Organizations - internal.** A large number of respondents highlighted the need for internal organizational improvements so they can be more effective and efficient. These include the need for better work plans, strategic plans, internal administrative procedures, more democratic decision-making, and complying with government requirements. Developing transparent financial systems and becoming more professional and specialized as organizations were also mentioned. The need to have a clear vision and understanding of their role was seen as especially important.
- **Stronger Organizations – external.** Another area of need refers more to the external, including improving communications skills, which includes learning how create public opinion under political polarization with credibility and legitimacy. This includes the need to maintain CSOs presence and visibility in the media and to build and/or improve their public image.

⁷ INGES, KEPA, DFID, CENIDH, Save The Children., Las Relaciones Gobierno - Sociedad Civil en el Actual Contexto. Documento de trabajo

⁸ Civicus, page 35.

- **Alliances and Networks** – Organizations also highlighted the importance and need to build alliances and networks both at the national and international levels as a way to strengthen both their internal and external activities.
- **Roles - Civil Society** – Another aspect of need identified by CSOs had to do with the role these organizations play in Nicaragua. Key informants highlighted this need as a top priority. Included in this group of needs is for CSOs to develop opportunities for consensus building and avoiding violence and further polarization. The need to continue educating citizens and building public awareness that support democratic values and processes, organize citizens in favor of the defense of rights, and help promote the renovation of political parties. There is a need for civil society support a legal environment where civil society can flourish and develop its potential.

4. Challenges and opportunities in the current context

- Nicaraguan civil society must strive for political independence and the strength to reinvent itself so it can continue to influence public policy and exercise oversight actions under any government.
- CSOs have the challenge and opportunity to build more and stronger alliances to recreate spaces for participation, coordinate and collaborate in joint action, build credibility and attain greater visibility.
- Civil society has the challenge of determining how to counter the criticisms of becoming an opposition party while remaining a proactive actor that rises in defense of democratic institutions and processes.
- In relation to the loss of space for action and the creation of a parallel system of civil society (CPCs), the challenge is how to gain citizens' confidence by demonstrating transparency and the capacity to respond to citizen's needs and interests.

At the same time, civil society has the opportunity to play a decisive role by using the capacity they have acquired over the years and their ability to reach a large number of citizens at the local and national levels. CSOs have the opportunity to build inclusive spaces and to reduce the tone of violence and hate in the political discourse, promoting instead dialogue and the construction a common agenda. They have the challenge and opportunity to promote a peaceful solution to the current political impasse.

5. Responsiveness and/or relevance of current activities to Civil Society needs

Sub-question: To what extent are the current task orders addressing these needs?

Based on the information collected and analyzed during this evaluation, it is clear that programs under review are well grounded in the civil society arena and that they do respond to relevant civil society needs. These programs are especially important at this time given the difficult political environment and the vulnerability of CSOs in this context. Below are the broad picture conclusions regarding responsiveness to the civil society sector.

- The ISP responds to civil society’s need to clarify its identity and space in the current context. Issues of governance, strategic plans, clear communications and having required documentation are especially important at this time. As will be seen in the following sections, most CSOs interviewed identified internal organizational capacity needs as high in their priority list. Key informants supported this assessment noting the key role CSOs have in defending and deepening democratic values.
- The Legal Framework program responds to the importance of defending a basic freedom that is threatened at this time and to civil society’s and the legal community’s need to deepen the knowledge and practice of this basic right.

Additional conclusions regarding the benefits and contributions to civil society by each program are presented under each program’s set of conclusions.

C. Objectives, Background & History/Description of the Projects Being Evaluated

USAID Nicaragua has supported reforms in both the justice and electoral systems. It has actively engaged civil society in the promotion of transparency, government oversight and the promotion of free and fair elections. Among its many contributions, it is important to mention the improvement of municipal governments in the late 90’s, the creation of a network of 20 mediation community centers and the training of more than 3,000 justice officials and lawyers on the Criminal Code. Since democracy returned USAID’s democracy portfolio has played a supportive role in the strengthening of Nicaragua democracy.

This evaluation aims to identify the best possible strategies to continue supporting democratic processes in Nicaragua. As the recent USAID democracy assessment concludes, the current situation is “more dire than that in 2003 owing to the drastic weakening of institutions of democratic governance over the three years since victory of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation in the 2006 elections”⁹.

In 2009 two major programs concluded its activities, these programs supported access to justice initiatives and the regional program that promoted transparency and accountability. In 2008 and 2009 the DG unit initiated two new programs with the objective of promoting civil society organizational development and the promotion of a supportive the legal environment for civil society. Both of these programs are the subject of this evaluation.

1. Institutional Strengthening Program – AED/MSI

a. Program Background and Development

This program responds to Strategic Objective Ruling Justly: More Responsive, Transparent Governance and supports the Governing Justly and Democratically. The ISP is implemented by AED in association with MSI under AED’s Leadership with Associates Cooperative Agreement No. AEP-A-

⁹ Associates in Rural Development, ARD Inc., *Democracy and Governance Assessment of Nicaragua*, Draft Report. March 2010– Draft Report, page v.

00-01-0004-00. This activity was designed as a program for strengthening civil society organizations in Nicaragua and contributes to, “increased institutional capacity in civil society to mobilize constituencies, participate in policy and decision-making, and exercise oversight over public institutions.”¹⁰ Towards this end, its purpose was: “to improve the organizational capacity, governance, structure, operational efficiency, and strategic vision of selected civil society organizations in Nicaragua. By contributing to each entity’s organizational development, the Mission hopes to contribute to their sustainability and strengthen the role of civil society in Nicaragua. A civil society capable of advocating for reforms and serving as a government watchdog is essential for institutionalizing democracy.”¹¹

Program Structure. The program is implemented by AED and MSI staff, with AED as prime and leading the administrative functions and the grants component. The MSI team includes the Program Director/COP and is responsible for leading the technical assistance component¹². It began as a 15 month program with a \$352,045 budget and quickly grew to three year program with over \$5.5 million budget. The table below describes its development.

Table 1. ISP Program Development

Phase	Total Amount	Life of Program	Number of orgs	Structure/changes
Phase 1 June 2008 September 2008	\$352,045	15 months	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COP at 91 days LOE • Associate Technical Expert at 91 days (about 30% of the time) who do not reside in Nicaragua • Five results
Phase 2 September 12, 2008	\$587.632	15 months	10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COP LOE increases to 105 days • Associate Technical Expert to 209 days (ATE increases to an average of 70% LOE, but increased in intensity from August 2008 to full time status for the program.
Phase 3 June 2009 to August 30, 2011	\$5,544,506	3 years	20 formal 10 emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four new results • Include \$1 million in small grants with a maximum of \$100,000 per organization to promote strengthening and stability of the selected organizations • 3 New Senior Technical Experts • Office and administrative staff • Technical Expert assumes decision making power and office schedule alternates to provide full coverage.

¹⁰ RFA, AED/MSI.Program Description, page 2

¹¹ RFA, AED/ MSI. Program Description page 1

¹² See Organizational Chart in Annex 5 and list of organizations Annex 4

Changes within USAID/Nicaragua. As the program underwent significant changes, important leadership changes were taking place within USAID/Nicaragua. During this period, the Mission Director, Deputy Mission Director, DG Team Leader and AOTR also changed. These changes brought about increased attention to the program, a closer relationship with USAID, and a clarification of what the program's impact could be.

b. Program objectives, strategy and activities

Program Results. As described above, the program began with five results, with four more being added after the last program modification. These include:

- Result 1: The organization's self-governance capacity strengthened.
- Result 2: The organization's ability to set a strategic plan is developed.
- Result 3: The organization's management structure and practices are re-organized in order to be able to carry out a new strategy.
- Result 4: An effective communication strategy developed.
- Result 5: A training program designed and implemented by the expert(s) for the Boards of Directors and technical teams, and if applicable, coalitions partners.
- Result 6: An assessment of opportunities within the non-formal civil society sector, civic leaders and the media is conducted.
- Result 7: A training strategy for non-formal organizations, individuals and the media is developed.
- Result 8: A comprehensive strategy to stimulate synergy among the civil society formal and nonformal sectors is developed.
- Result 9: Effective grants program created and managed to address strengthening need in the civil society sector and develop activities under results 1- 8.

Strategy. As described in its purpose, the program's strategy is designed to improve the organizational capacity, governance, structure, operational efficiency and strategic vision of selected CSOs. The program achieves its objectives by providing customized technical assistance, workshops and grants to target organizations in five areas of organizational capacity. Those that receive the "full service" have benefited from an institutional assessment that results in a baseline from which they identify strengths and weaknesses. In addition, ten organizations received an average of \$70k in grants to implement institutional strengthening activities.

These services include:

Institutional assessment. The MSI team has developed an Institutional Development Framework that responds to key results and assesses organizations accordingly.

The framework is used to develop a baseline for each organization which gives a rapid assessment of their level of development in each area. The levels have been classified as incipient, developing, expansion/consolidation/ and sustainability. To date, MSI has informed us that 16 organizations have a completed baseline.

Technical Assistance. The program provides customized technical assistance to target CSOs in a broad number of institutional development topics. This is customized training with Boards of

Directors and technical Staff. In each of the results listed above, the project has defined the technical assistance to be provided and developed specific protocols for each. Of the 19 organizations, 16 have received customized technical assistance. The organizations that have received the most intense support through technical assistance are, in descending order: Movimiento por Nicaragua (280), Congreso Permanente de Mujeres Empresarias de Nicaragua (247), and IEPP (190).

To some degree, technical assistance and support to organizations depends on demand and interest from organizations. Level of support also appears to depend on various other factors, including person assigned to the organization, time factors, and degree of understanding of available services. Senior Consultants (Spears, Escobar, Maradiaga, Lopez and Matias have divided main responsibility to support target organizations among them.

Workshops. The ISP program provides a series of workshops in organizational development areas. From June 2008 to May 2010 a total of 13 workshops were held, a large number of these with more than one session per workshop to keep participant number at approximately 20. A total of 464 participants were trained, with media and communications training having the highest number of participants. Workshop topics have included:

- Board of Directors
- Conflict resolution
- Project Design
- Effective Management
- Gobernability
- Grant Orientation'
- Institutional Development Framework /baseline
- Advocacy and Communication
- Management of Mass Media
- New Media
- Tax Reform
- Strategic Planning
- Communications Strategy

Grants. This component was one of the most significant additions of the June 2009 modification. The total amount designated for grants was \$1,000,000, with no single grant exceeding \$100,000. MSI/AED utilized the modality of Fixed Obligation Grants (FOGs) because they believed that, "given the operating environment, the grantees may be hindered by the financial reporting requirements and other provisions normally associated with a standard grant. Second, these organizations have not had opportunities or incentives to develop systems that meet particular donor requirements"¹³. This modality has two key differences from a normal sub-grant: it requires grantees to identify each of the products ahead of time and document its cost and it provides financial resources to grantees once proof of the product is provided and approved, forcing organizations to advance funds to complete products before they can be reimbursed.

Ten organizations were awarded grants ranging from \$48,173 to \$76,295, with an average grant of \$67,820 . Recipient organizations have produced strategic and operating plans, administrative and operating manuals, alliances, information systems, software and obtained training in a rage of areas including project design and leadership.

¹³ AED/MSI Proposal

Grants are managed well by AED and tracking is very systematically carried out and updated information easily obtained through a grant database. This database includes all key aspects of grants, including milestones, products, timelines, visits to organizations and grant disbursements. It does not include any of the technical assistance components. A separate database is being finalized that is expected to serve that component in a similar fashion. The Grant team has a “grant spot checking system” that will result in visiting 10% of grant recipients per year where a review of the organization’s financial systems takes place.

c. Notable achievements

***Sub-question:** To what extent are the two activities effective in achieving their overarching objectives and results?*

The ISP program is well on its way to meeting its targets and its work has already resulted in changes and improvements of participating organizations. Below are some examples of these achievements:

Engaging membership. The *Congreso Permanente de Mujeres EmpresariAS* held its annual meeting with 85% attendance of its members from across the country. They re-engaged their members and created new chapters during this time. This strong participation was the result of visits to each chapter and a clear strategic plan based on shared values that was drafted with ISP support.

Customized Technical Assistance – With the departure of their Executive Director, *Eduquemos* went into a crisis that divided its board of directors. Shortly after, the ISP program carried out an organizational institutional assessment and provided the results to the board of directors. This analysis helped the Board clearly understand the issues facing the organization and the actions they needed to take. With ISP technical assistance they adjusted the strategic plan, developed clear objectives and a new work plan. A key moment in resolving the crisis was a private meeting with the ISP team where they helped its president see with objectivity the crux of the problem with the Board of Directors. President Ernesto Robleto pointed out that from a divided and ineffective board *Eduquemos* is now “a team that is working together and having better results”.

Organizational Structure. IEEP has seen two important improvements resulting from its participation in the program. The original organizational structure resulted in contradictory instructions coming from the President and the Vice-President which originated tensions in the personnel. The ISP program facilitated a clarification of roles and responsibilities that led to a restructuring process and the creation of three units with their own Director, one of which is a communications unit that responds to the internal and external communication needs of the organization. These changes did not represent additional costs and did not create internal tensions. Instead, they have generated a better and more cohesive working environment, improved internal communication and improved morale.

Resource mobilization. INCEJU is proud of its proposal to IRI and its ability to obtain new resources. They attribute this success to the training and support they received from the ISP program.

d. Challenges and opportunities

The program has faced challenges that are due to both, internal and external factors. These include:

- The program has generated a high demand for services that it finds sometimes difficult to meet with its current level of staffing which is complicated by the nature of its key staff who travel regularly in and out of the country.
- Participating organizations are currently awaiting a second round of grants, but there is concern that due to the larger number of organizations the grants will be much smaller. Indeed, at this time the program anticipates awarding grants to all target organizations with a reduced level of resources, resulting in much smaller grants.
- There is pent-up demand for financing activities that are more content-based and go beyond the institutional strengthening focus of the program. The scarce amount of funding is putting pressure on organizations to survive, especially those related to DG activities.
- Having two organizations implementing the program under the Leader with Associates mechanism creates a need to integrate two distinct organizations and constantly review and adjust roles and responsibilities and to maintain a high level of attention to integration and information sharing for effective joint action as a team. This is further complicated by the program structure that includes a part-time COP.

Given the current environment, the ISP program, which focuses on organizational development, also has interesting opportunities:

- By strengthening democratic practices within the sector, the program has the opportunity to contribute to the deepening of democratic values in a critical group of CSOS and to the positive public image of the sector. The program has already contributed to changes within organizations that should result in making these organizations more effective and able to adapt to the current situation. Increasing the practice of democratic values and increased transparency will contribute to the positive public perception of the sector.
- The scarce level of available resources at this time is an opportunity for the program in the sense that organizations that may not have had time before to focus on organizational development activities do have the time now to devote to strengthening internal mechanisms and give the needed attention to program activities.
- In an environment characterized by polarizing messages, the ISP could contribute to preparing organizations to emit solid concrete messages. By building and developing the communication skills of target CSOs and improving the quality of their communication products, the program could meet an important need in Nicaragua.
- The 30 organizations represent an opportunity for building tools, knowledge and experience in organizational development that could then contribute to work in countries with similar socio-political environments.

2. Supportive Framework Program (SFP) – AED/ICNL

a. Program Background and Development

Purpose. The purpose of the SFP program is “to provide technical assistance to a core group of Nicaraguan CSOs to help them quickly develop the skills, tools, and proposals to credibly and effectively insist on proper application of current law, counter new restrictive laws, and advocate for civil society legal reforms”¹⁴

This program started as a one year program and was extended to a two year program whose budget increased from \$300k to \$864k. The amendment allowed the program to expand the number of participating organizations, increase the level of effort of key staff, especially that of the Legal Adviser, and expand the scope of the final conference. The table below describes the key elements of this change.

Table 2. SFP Program Development

Phase	Total Amount	Life of Program	Number of orgs	Structure/changes
September 2008	\$300,000	12 months	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Director - AED • Legal Adviser – ICNL leads technical aspects of the program. • In-Country Legal Expert 100% LOE • Other legal experts
September 2009	\$867,098	24 months	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOE for Legal Advisor • Expands the conference into a more significant and larger international event.

b. Program Objective, Strategy and Activities

Results. The SFP program has the following results as part of its Cooperative Agreement:

Result 1: Submit a list of CSOs selected to receive technical assistance to USAID Mission for Approval.

Result 2: CSOs capable of engaging in the promotion of an enabling environment and a regulatory framework supportive of CSO creation and operation.

Result 3: Mechanisms for effective civil society-legislature dialogue improved with routine consultation between the legislative body and CSOs on regulatory issues affecting NGOs.

Result 4: Effective management of small grants to undertake specific tasks under Objectives 2 & 3.

¹⁴ AED/ICNL Proposal page 11.

Strategy. ICNL's strategy was to focus assistance on a core group of CSOs to ensure that the Nicaraguan CSO sector developed experts in civil society law, legal drafting, and advocacy who can leverage their skills to engage CSOs across the sector in support of law reform.¹⁵

ICNL was careful on its selection of target organizations to be included in the program. Both, with its first group of expert CSOs and with the expanded group, ICNL set out to build an effective and balanced group. Its CSO selection criteria included:

- ability to develop technical expertise in NGO law reform;
- experience developing and executing advocacy strategies;
- organizational capacity, in terms of available trained staff, to work on reform;
- access to the National Assembly;
- access to networks of NGOs with members reflecting a range of subsectors;
- ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders; and
- willingness to work with other partner NGOs and ICNL.

As a result of this process, the participating organizations in the SFP program are:

- CDC
- CPDH
- ProJusticia
- Fundación Esquipulas
- Coordinadora Civil-León (CC-León)
- Coordinadora Civil - Managua
- Fundación Nicaragua Nuestra
- Asociación Movimiento de Mujeres de Chinandega (AMM-Chinandega)
- Movimiento por Nicaragua (MpN)
- Hagamos Democracia (HD)
- Red Local
- Federación Coordinadora Nicaragüense de Organismos No Gubernamentales que Trabaja con la Niñez y la Adolescencia (CODENI)

ICNL supports this “expert group” with training, technical assistance to help them quickly develop the knowledge and skills to credibly and effectively counter restrictive laws and advocate for more enabling ones. Through a small grant program, ICNL supported and encouraged initiatives that reviewed law reform proposals, and educated other CSOs, the public, and the media regarding the need for supportive laws that regulated the sector's activities. These small grants also had the aim of deepening their capacity. ICNL provided models and comparative analysis to the group as it developed its recommendations. Through outreach to the legislature, they supported mechanisms for more effective dialogue with the legislature on regulatory issues affecting the sector¹⁶. In sum, the program components included:

- Identification and engagement of a core group and initial assessment

¹⁵ AED/ICNL Proposal page 12

¹⁶ AED/ICNL Proposal.

- Technical assistance and training.
- Small grants
- Identification of and formal and informal meeting and workshops with key legislators.
- National Conference where international and national experts presented on topics related to the right of freedom of association.

Training. CSOs were trained in skills and content in a focused area which included training in advocacy skills, constitutional law in the area of freedom of association and the legal personality requirements for CSOs in Nicaragua, and training-of-trainers. To date, 225 CSOs have received training by the program during this time.

Grants. Twenty one grants were awarded by ICNL with a range between \$2 to 10k. These grants promoted an in-depth understanding of the situation through research undertaken by the organizations themselves and outreach to other CSOs and the public in other geographical areas at the municipal and departmental levels through workshops and community fairs, to legislators and university sectors, and through town halls as spaces for public debate. These grants were based on demand and reviewed on a continuous basis based on ideas and proposals made by the participating CSOs. Participating organizations received 1-3 awards.

Through these grants, organizations were able to reach a wide number of citizens and train them in these topics. CSOs trained approximately of 3,000 citizens. The program held activities in several municipalities outside of Managua.

c. Notable achievements

***Sub-question:** To what extent are the two activities effective in achieving their overarching objectives and results?*

- **Effective mobilization against a threat** – CSOs mobilized effectively to repel a Manual proposed by the government which threatened to limit their ability to obtain funding and continue their work. CSOs built on each other’s capacities to obtain a common goal. In this case, Projusticia carried out research, Hagamos Democracia held several workshops and town hall meetings, CPDH and Fundación Esquipulas reached out to municipalities in the interior of the country taking the message to a different level, and Fundación Nicaragua Nuestra reached out to journalists and other CSOs and engaged them to obtain larger support. As the CSOs shared their message throughout the country and targeted members of the legislative and the international community, the public saw a coalition that was determined to defeat a threat that would have impacted the entire sector if it was not stopped.
- **A Coalition.** The program brought together a well-selected group of committed CSOs that have

“The common threat motivated a strong participation and interest. We learned that we have more in common than we thought and learned to respect our differences. The clear distribution of responsibilities according to our capacities helped us to be more efficient” Projusticia

coalesced into a de facto coalition through their concerted efforts and fast actions. Working coalitions are spaces for rapid action; they must be created with very clear objectives and well defined activities. Its members are empowered and can move to action very rapidly. Coalitions get rapid results and, if well structured and armed with a creative plan of action, can be very effective. The coalition formed under the initiative of ICNL was powerful in its actions; its members had prepared in advance, were trained and carried out research on the constitutional right of freedom of association, and most importantly, were able to identify a common threat and the importance of their role in defense an important right.

- **Building National and International Awareness** - 200 organizations, 350 participants and more than ten international speakers participated in a two day conference on freedom of association. The conference consolidated the coalition and contributed to building international awareness of the Nicaraguan situation as well as provided Nicaraguan CSOs with international linkages, credibility, visibility and new ideas to solve their problems.
- **Limited resources produced great results.** ICNL's approach to awarding supportive small grants of \$2 to \$10k is innovative, efficient and supportive of CSOs. Even though the process may be more administratively cumbersome for ICNL, it preferred to take on this added responsibility and offered an on-demand rather than an open competition process. ICNL developed an application form that takes the applicant through the process of responding to objectives, justification, expected results, chronology of activities, monitoring and evaluation plan and a detail budget. Partner CSOs submitted a request according to their needs, performance times, and level of interest. Another excellent aspect of the small grant activity was the opportunity that ICNL gave to its partners that wanted to work collaborative with other organization. The upper ceiling for the small grants was \$5,000. If working in collaboration with other organization the grant ceiling was raised to \$10,000.
- **National out-reach** – CSOs were effective multipliers of their knowledge are provided training to 140 organizations and almost 3,000 citizens trained in multiple municipalities. Among them are lawyers, journalists and legislators.

d. Challenges and opportunities

The SFP program will face some interesting challenges and opportunities in the current charged political environment. Among the key challenges are:

- Maintaining CSO interest and public opinion momentum is challenging. ICNL and its partners will be pressed to identify actions that will assure the continuity and commitment of civil society to support the right of freedom of association.
- Maintaining a small successful group together is very important. How ICNL maintains the motivation and cohesiveness in this group is a challenge for next year. Especially when new CSOs from other parts of the country will join the initial core of mostly Managua based CSOs.
- Distributing scarce resources, avoiding predilections, and benefiting all interested and contributing CSOs. It is a challenge to expand a program to a national level when resources are scarce and new organizations might be perceived as reducing the benefits of the ones already in the program.

Opportunities. There are also important opportunities for the program at this time. These include:

- Given the level of expertise this group has attained, this niche can represent an area of strength for participating organizations which could represent develop into new services, donors and credibility.
- The possibility of institutionalizing the program and extending it to the national level. The capacity in-country has increased during the last year and the opportunity to maintain this knowledge and institutionalize it is viable at this time.
- Besides the promotion of the right of freedom of association, the program could consider other actions that prevent the application of the draft Manual in its totality or by parts, as is the current practice and was reported by several CSOs. These could include going beyond awareness raising and information to advocacy and actively identifying other threats.

D. Conclusions – Institutional Strengthening Program and Supportive Framework Programs

Sub-question: What are the views of local civil society about whether these two activities are relevant to them?

Sub-question: Do civil society partners believe they should be implemented in different ways?

1. Conclusions - Institutional Strengthening program - AED/MSI

a. Responsiveness and/or relevance of current activities to Civil Society needs

1. **Financial Vulnerability** – The program responds to CSOs urgent need for funding and financial resources through its grant component. The scarce amount of funding is putting pressure on organizations to survive, especially those related to DG activities. Participating organizations are currently awaiting the second round of grants, but there is concern that the increased number of organizations will result in much smaller amounts. Indeed, the program anticipates awarding grants of \$10k that are much smaller than the \$70k average of the first round.
2. **Resource Development.** Already there are examples where organizations have been able to obtain resources with the support of the ISP program highlighting the effectiveness this training can have. In some cases this is due to having the required documents (strategic plan or legal personality) and in others it is due because program support gives enough confidence in the grantee for another donor to award support.
3. **Stronger Organizations – internal.** A significant number of CSOs interviewed indicated improvements within their organizations as a result of their involvement in the program. Examples of these include improved cohesion, better board-staff relations, clearer vision and goals, new strategic plan (16 have completed their plans), and organizational manuals that help

define procedures and position descriptions within the organization. In their words, “the program helped us put order inside our house”.

4. **Stronger Organizations - external.** Several organizations noted improvements in communication skills, including a focus on use of new media and managing the media have been valued by the organizations receiving this training. In cases where they have local members across the country, focus on communications has helped improve their capacity to reach-out and engaged their membership. Many believe they have increased visibility and recognition as a result of participating in the program.
5. **Increasing the menu of services** – Within the context of organization development, CSOs expressed need in continuing to develop improved communication strategies with the outside communities and financial and accounting systems.
6. **Increased level of confidence** – Many of the organizations expressed increased level of confidence in preparing documents that needed approval by government entities. These included legal personalities and by-laws.
7. **Beyond Organizational Development** – There is a pent-up demand for supporting activities that are more content-based and go beyond the current institutional strengthening focus of the program. Organizations mentioned needs in improving the technical aspects of their work now that their internal systems were stronger and their missions more focused.
8. **Alliances.** CSOs have valued the opportunity to meet and get to know other CSOs through the diverse program activities. Some of them have already made important alliances through the ISP program. Strategic and efficient alliances are crucial in political polarized environments.

a. **Effectiveness and/or sustainability of current activities**

Sub-question: To what extent are the two activities effective in achieving their overarching objectives and results?

9. **Adjusting to growth.** As the two modifications increased the budget from \$352k to \$5.5 million, the program maintained its management structure despite the inherent differences a larger program requires. This includes having a COP and DCOP who do not reside in-country. The modification brought about an implementation role for AED which took the lead in the administration, financial and grants components. Although adjustments have been made in these areas, some CSOs noted delays in response and difficulties in coordination, thus the program can benefit from further improvements in these areas.
10. **Fixed Obligation Grants (FOG).** The management of grants is excellent. The component is managed as a result (Result 9) but is not as integrated into the technical component as it could be. FOGs are based on reimbursement of expenses and require CSOs to front scarce financial resources that place additional pressures on organizations that are already facing financial difficulties.
11. **Program Design.**
 - **Matching program purpose with design.** The initial activities and results included in the program design were important but not sufficient to achieve the purpose of “*Increased institutional capacity in civil society to mobilize constituencies, participate in*”

policy and decision-making, and exercise oversight over public institutions". In selecting an approach that focused purely on organizational development for this purpose, the potential for unmet expectations from USAID for the program was created.

- **Changes in program oversight.** Changes within the USAID/Nicaragua DG Team represented an opportunity to review program strategy and better understand and communicate its design and objectives throughout the agency. In a complex and challenging environment, especially during an election year, there is a need for fluent communication between AOTR and program to lower the risk of any political problems and increase the possibilities to create appropriate responses.
 - **Leader with Associate.** Having two different contractors implementing the program under the Leader with Associates mechanism creates the need to integrate two distinct organizations in a project and the importance to constantly review and adjust roles and responsibilities and to maintain a high level of attention to integration and information sharing in order to attain an effective project team.
12. **Framework and Tools.** The ISP program has developed and structured a thoughtful and organized system for providing organizational development services. Its tools, based on the Institutional Development Framework, for organizational assessment help identify organizational development in five areas of institutional capacity. Services that respond to each area have been designed and customized assistance is provided to each organization.
 13. **Professional team and quality of service.** Organizations interviewed gave high marks for the quality of technical assistance and workshops with few exceptions. Frequent comments referred to the high quality of professionals, the respect with which they were treated, and the commitment they demonstrated to the program.
 14. **Demand for services.** The program has generated a demand for services that it finds sometimes difficult to meet with its current level of staffing. This has been complicated by the nature of its key staff that travels regularly in and out of the country.

2. Conclusions - Supportive Framework program - AED/ICNL

a. Responsiveness and/or relevance of current activities to Civil Society needs

1. **Resources.** Although the grant amounts were limited in nature, they produced great results and met the needs of CSOs to carry out activities that gave them visibility and presence in the field. ICNL approach to awarding supportive small grants of \$2 to \$10k is innovative, efficient and supportive of CSOs.
2. **Increased capacity.** The program created critical legal knowledge and expertise among lawyers, civil society leaders and CSOs that will permit them to defend the rights of freedom of association and convey its importance as a core value to democracy.
3. **Role in defending democratic values.** The program effectively responded to the threat presented by the government's effort to put in place a manual that restricted CSO ability to receive funds and carry out its work with no apparent negative consequences.

4. **Alliance building.** Through the SFP program, CSOs have experience the power of working together and mobilized effectively for joint action. They have implemented grants together, organized to defeat the draft Manual and served as hosts for an international conference. In addition, CSOs published and signed a Declaration on freedom of association values and principles.
5. **International Networking.** The International Conference succeeded in building awareness of successful solutions to similar problems facing Nicaraguan civil society and in establishing international linkages with these organizations. In addition, the program contributed to building awareness within the international community regarding the current situation and the problems facing civil society regarding freedom of association, freedom of expression in Nicaragua
6. **Early warning response.** The program's capacity to detect the Manual as a threat demonstrated its ability to serve as an early warning system with capacity for quick response.
7. **Effective role in influencing public opinion and the National Assembly.** Through its outreach to legislators and effective radio programs, the SFP program raised awareness of value and issues related to freedom of association.

b. Effectiveness and/or sustainability of current activities

Sub-question: To what extent are the two activities effective in achieving their overarching objectives and results?

8. **Effective Selection of CSOs.** The program brought together a well-selected group of committed CSOs that have coalesced into a de facto coalition. ICNL utilized useful criteria for selecting CSOs and expanded the group by asking members to invite others. In addition, it completed the group by balancing political tendencies and skill capabilities.
9. **Small grants** served to deepen the legal knowledge in CSOs by putting it into practice through workshops, fairs, research studies and town hall meetings. From these grants, important products have been obtained as are the CDC's Guidebook on CSO Compliance, ProJusticia's Brochure on Rights of Nicaraguan Civil Society Organizations, and CDC's Study on Misunderstood or Misapplied Aspects of Nicaragua's NGO Law and the study on Comparative Practices in NGO Oversight.
10. **Knowledge replication** – the training of trainers approach helped to multiply the numbers of citizens and organizations aware and informed of the right of free association.
11. **Synergies.** There is potential for AED to encourage coordination among the two programs it implements in Nicaragua. There are five organizations that receive services from both programs with additional interchanges of information possible between the two..

c. Achievement of objectives

The ICNL program is well on its way to meeting its objectives. Targets in its PMP have already met and surpassed. The amendment called for additional time spent expended in Nicaragua by the Legal Advisor, additional time for the local consultants, additional trips by the Legal Advisor to Nicaragua,

and additional grants for participant CSOs. The Legal Advisor has traveled to Nicaragua every month with an average stay of a week in the country and small grants have increased from 6 to 21.

E. Recommendations

***Sub-question:** Is there a reasonable expectation of achieving sustainable results by the established ending dates?*

***Sub-question:** Are there changes in focus that should be made under the existing activities or in follow-on civil society assistance?*

***Sub-question:** Is there any significant risk that the timing of key assistance dates (e.g., when the task order ends, is extended, or a follow-on mechanism is competed) in relation to planned elections would jeopardize achieving objectives?*

Civil society in Nicaragua has gained important ground in the last three decades, has matured and developed skills and credibility that will permit it to play an important role in the current political context. Nevertheless, the sector has critical weaknesses that threaten its ability to effectively fulfill its role. International donors, including USAID, have been major supporters of CSOs over the years and have contributed to their development. It is important that this support continue during this challenging period, as civil society organizations adjust themselves to a new political reality and struggle to maintain the spaces for action they have built over the years. As described in the section on the state of civil society, the majority of those interviewed perceived themselves as being in a crisis.

Today, in light of weak political parties and a polarizing environment, Nicaraguan CSOs has filled the void and can play a mediating role that proactively seeks peaceful solutions and ways to be inclusive; it can promoting dialogue to seek solutions based on common values; and in can defend the democratic values and processes that, according to the latest NDI survey, are increasingly valued by citizens.

Therefore, it is highly recommended to maintain both current activities beyond the election period as recommended above. In addition, it would be beneficial for the USAID Mission engage CSOs, in coordination with ISP, as they redefine their roles to learn how they are projecting themselves in the near future to identify areas of involvement in the future programs.

The two activities reviewed in this evaluation are meeting important civil society needs and are producing good results. Both will benefit from expanding their timeframe in order to consolidate their impact and build local capacity to sustain their activities beyond the life of the program.

In interviews with both project implementers (MSI and ICNL) and with the Nicaraguan CSOs, respondents indicated that the current political environment will not impede achieving their project objectives. They indicated that conditions for learning and putting new knowledge into practice were present in their organizations. They also saw opportunities for increased collaboration as a result of the difficulties they are facing as a sector. The support of well qualified and very professional consultants in both programs will be even more important as these organizations struggle to cope with the challenges and opportunities at this time. To succeed, they

will need continuous planning and adjustments to stay on-course and to avoid losing time and or resources.

The reasons above lead us to recommend the following:

1. Recommendations - Institutional Strengthening program

a. Responsiveness and/or relevance of ISP program to Civil Society needs

1. **Financial Vulnerability.** Maintain the same level of grants in the second round of funding and provide incentives for alliances between formal and emerging organizations to promote joint action and learning. If no additional funding is possible, explore possibility of allocating more funding to those organizations that have not received any grants or to providing grants to a group of organizations.
2. **Resource Development.** Increase training opportunities in resource development, fundraising, and program design. These will help organizations increase their portfolios and diversify their donors. In addition, provide organizations with technical assistance so they can identify possible new services and ways to market them as a way to increase their financial sustainability.
3. **Stronger Organizations – internal.** Continue to the focus on organizational development in the current areas as these are strengthening CSOs and are producing desirable results. Continue both one-on-one technical assistance and workshops.
Offer forums where organizations can share their best practices with each other as a way to generate solutions to common problems and promote networking. This will be especially important to the emergent groups
4. **Stronger Organizations – external.** Strengthen the area of developing institutional communication strategies and formulating better communication messages.
5. **Increasing the menu of services.** Expand the menu of services to include new ones such strengthening financial and accounting systems.
6. **Increased level of confidence.** With the end of the Nicaraguan government fiscal year, services that provide guidance on meeting financial and legal requirements are especially relevant. Continue to provide these services to organizations in the program and seek ways to expand these services to those in the ICNL program.
7. **Beyond Organizational Development.** Given CSOs needs that fall beyond the ISP program, it will be important to facilitate linkages to other available resources such as the new USAID program implemented by World Learning. Key to this opportunity will be the importance of clear and efficient coordination, both inside USAID as well as between the ISP, World Learning and the CSOs supportive networks.

b. Effectiveness and/or sustainability of ISP program

8. **Adjusting to growth.** Establish mechanisms to improve time responsiveness between program and clients and seek ways to assure a joint understanding of timeframes and expectations with all CSO partners. Increase the number of Nicaraguan Senior Staff to increase local capacity and

provide a sense of continuity of service with client CSOs and explore ways to increase coverage for each.

- **Integration.** Continue to improve the integration between grants and the technical components to improve impact and efficiency. This could include better integration of program information systems, joint calendars and/or participation of all staff in key meetings
 - **Local capacity development.** Capitalize on the solid foundation put in place by the program by developing local capacity in organizational development so it will continue ISP activities beyond the life of the program. Explore ways to begin building this capacity within the CSO community or through other institutions within current program activities. Examples could include subcontracting through local organizations or mentoring a Nicaraguan CSO that has the capacity to provide some of these services.
9. **Grants** – Reduce financial burden on CSOs. FOG mechanisms should not be used with all CSOs. Many of the current ISP partners have managed international funding and are able to respond to traditional grant mechanisms. Smaller NGOs may need to rely on FOGs or In-kind grants, but these should include both equipment and services. Explore alliances or funding consortia as a way to expand grant mechanisms and offer options if possible.
10. **Alliances.** Continue to promote networking and alliances, and promote linkages with national and international organizations. During times of vulnerability and crisis, international relationships and linkages among CSOs are especially important.
11. **Program Design.** Clarify within USAID the expectations and reach for the ISP program. This is an important program at a time when civil society is being threatened by a changing political environment. Its

Recommendations for the short term:

- **Timeframe.** Expand the program in its time as organizational development responds to CSO needs, was rated as high in importance by the majority of organizations interviewed and the program plays a critical role in sustaining civil society in a challenging political context. Given that elections will take place in November 2011, an extension that goes through August 2012 will allow the program enough time to accomplish significant results and will give USAID a strong program in place beyond the election period.
- **Program Strategy.** Maintain program strategy with its focus on organizational development, especially communication strategies through technical assistance, workshops and grants. If expansion is possible new activities could include:
 - a. Increase training opportunities in resource development, program design, fundraising, and financial and accounting systems;
 - b. Adjust program structure to respond to program needs and improve integration among its components;
 - c. Facilitate linkages to other resources to respond to CSOs needs beyond the scope of the ISP and promote increased sharing of best practices and networking.

- d. Explore the possibility of expanding resources for small grants under this program. The funds available for grants is smaller than what was awarded in the first round when there were only ten organizations; today there are 30 potential grantees.

A modification to make these changes before the end of the fiscal year could also address recommendations made regarding building local capacity.

2. Recommendations - Supportive Framework program - AED/ICNL

a. Responsiveness and/or relevance of SFP program to Civil Society needs

1. **Resources.** Maintain program strategy with its effective use of small grants.
2. **Increased capacity.** Maintain program strategy with its key capacity building activities; training, research, small grants and conferences.
3. **Role in defending democratic values.** This is the only program consistently working in the area of freedom of association and it is achieving important objectives and should be expanded. If expansion is possible new activities could include:
 - Provide legal assistance to those CSOs that have encountered problems or are having difficulties meeting requirements; and
 - Consider adding resources for publications that can be understood by the general public on the freedom of association rights.
4. **Alliances.** Continue to promote networking and alliances, and promote linkages with national and international organizations. During times of vulnerability and crisis, international relationships among CSOs are especially important and the international conference was especially so.
5. **Developing a university curriculum to gain sustainability.** To maintain the achievements of the program to date in terms of CSOs ability to respond quickly to threats, act as a coalition and increase the knowledge base it will be important to develop a university curriculum that will contribute to consolidating the issue in the Nicaraguan Law Schools will contribute towards achieving this.
6. **Judicial actors.** Look for ways to educate, inform and elicit the interest of judicial authorities.

b. Effectiveness and/or sustainability of current activities

7. **Information management.** Considering the importance of outreach and training, the program will benefit from putting in place a simple database that will provide them information regarding the number of CSOs trained, their location and record number of citizens attending the workshops according to gender, municipalities where training took place and the type of training provided. Such a database will help management decisions.
8. **Synergies.** Improve Coordination with MSI and the AED. Both, the SFP and the ISP programs will benefit if all implementers shared plans and interacted more frequently.

Given the vulnerability organizations are facing at this time, coordination of both programs could facilitate technical assistance and if needed legal support to CSOs that face problems with their legal papers or need guidance with specific problems.

Short term recommendations

- **Timeframe.** Expand the program's time period sufficiently enough to build CSO capacity to place freedom of association as a right that is understood and recognized by citizens as an important value. Defending the right of freedom of association responds to CSO needs and was rated as high in importance by the majority of organizations interviewed.
- **Program Strategy and Structure.** Maintain program strategy with its key activities: training, research, small grants and conferences. Expand stakeholders to include judicial actors. Look for ways to educate, inform and elicit the interest of judicial authorities. Seek to adjust program structure by strengthening local leadership. If expansion is possible new activities could include:
 - a. Providing legal assistance to those CSOs that have encountered problems or are having difficulties meeting requirements;
 - b. Publications that can be understood by the general public on the freedom of association rights;
 - c. A database that accumulates relevant information of its network, participants (by gender, organization and geographic location) and tools developed by the CSOs;
 - d. A university curriculum that consolidates the issue in Nicaraguan Law Schools; and
 - e. Increase funding for small grants. The funds have been well used, replicate knowledge, and have allowed the program to reach beyond Managua.

Given that this is the only program consistently working in the area of freedom of association and that it has produced good results, we would recommend a modification that extends the program through March 2012, beyond the election period.

3. Recommendations - Civil Society

a. How to better support civil society in the current context

1. **Maintain the current focus on strengthening civil society organizations.** Given the political environment and the threats to democratic values and institutions, it is critical for USAID to maintain its support for Nicaraguan CSOs. This will permit civil society to better navigate the current crisis and effectively play its role.
2. **Expand geographic distribution.** Work with organizations that are distributed geographically across the country to have a more plural representation of civil society organizations as partners.
3. **Focus on youth.** Continue with the focus on youth – engage, support and develop youth organizations and leadership.
4. **Expand representation of other sectors.** Bring into the program organizations that serve to meet social needs and are less of a political target.

5. **Improve the image and awareness of civil society contributions.** Produce a study that identifies and shows the value and clear contributions of civil society towards meeting the gaps that exists in public services and the value added of the DG NGOs. Disseminate results widely. This study should be done by a credible Latin American research institution and/or think tank.
6. **Alliances.** In a difficult political environment, alliances towards a common goal are important. International donors such as USAID should explore collaborative efforts with other donors and encourage grantees to diversify their funding for program activities. Take this opportunity to built a new public plural imagine.
7. **Cross sector activities.** Explore possibilities to implement cross sector activities across teams to reinforce citizen participation and democratic values in areas such as education, environment or food security.
8. **Communication.** Develop capacity within CSOs to generate public opinion through messages that are relevant, appropriate and positively engage government officials and take the opportunity to encourage the participation of new public opinion leaders.
9. **Renovation of CSO Leadership.** Findings indicate a need for civil society leaders who bring new visions with the skill to interpret the political environment in which civil society evolves, are sensible to citizen's needs and interests, do not have a partisan tie and practice democratic values. Programs and activities that help identify and train new leaders will contribute to this renovation.
10. **International Sphere.** It is vital to support Nicaraguan CSOs develop international relations and linkages. These will permit them to generate international support for their work and help strengthen values and ideals recognized internationally.
11. **Risk Assessment.** Organizations are struggling to cope with the challenges and opportunities at this time. To succeed, they will need to continuously gauge the environment, assess the risks, identify possible scenarios and make adjustments to stay on-course and to avoid problems. USAID can help provide CSOs with technical assistance to increase CSOs capacity in this area
12. **Programs** – As discussed above, extend the two programs beyond the election period. If possible avoid drastic changes in both program managements and oversight as this will help to build a stronger team that will make the best possible decisions in the months to come. Seek to make adjustments and changes swiftly as the country enters elections and a transition to a new governmental administration.

Annex 1

Guidance for an Evaluation of USAID's Assistance to Nicaraguan Civil Society

USAID/Nicaragua/DGO

June 2010

I. Purpose of the Evaluation:

This mid-term evaluation will cover two closely-related activities in support of civil society in Nicaragua. The two activities are carried out under two separate task orders under the same IQC (Indefinite Quantity Contract) managed by the DCHA/Democracy Office in USAID/Washington. The AED/MSI task order focuses on organizational development of NGOs and currently supports 30 NGOs; it is scheduled to end on August 30, 2011. The AED/ICNL task order focuses on improving the legal framework for NGOs; USAID is considering extending the end date of this task order.

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide USAID with background information and analysis to help make management decisions in a changing political environment about whether, when, and how to continue these two types of support to Nicaraguan civil society organizations.

II. Key Evaluation Questions: The evaluation report must address the following questions:

- What is the general status of civil society in Nicaragua? Can it be categorized in subgroups? If so, what are the typical organizations in each category? Are the key “organizational development” and “supportive framework” needs of Nicaraguan civil society organizations (CSOs), collectively or individually? To what extent are the current task orders addressing these needs?
-
- What are the views of local civil society about whether these two activities are relevant to them? Do civil society partners believe they should be implemented in different ways?
- To what extent are the two activities effective in achieving their overarching objectives and results? Is there a reasonable expectation of achieving sustainable results by the established ending dates? Are there changes in focus that should be made under the existing activities or in follow-on civil society assistance?
- How do the civil society partners and beneficiaries of these programs interact with the broader political and governmental environment? And how are they affected by it? Is

there any significant risk that the timing of key assistance dates (e.g., when the task order ends, is extended, or a follow-on mechanism is competed) in relation to planned elections would jeopardize achieving objectives?

- III. Recommended format for Report (Not exceeding 30 pages, excluding Executive Summary):
- A. Purpose of the Evaluation and Statement of the Key Questions to be Answered.
 - B. Objectives, Background, & History/Description of the Project/Activity Being Evaluated. (This section should give a factual picture of the objectives, or changing objectives of the activity; the implementors or participants, different phases; external factors that affected the achievement of objectives; and notable achievements. It should generally not be more than half of the whole report.)
 - C. Conclusions of the Evaluator about the Key Questions or other Key issues identified during the evaluation. These conclusions should be numbered and concisely stated (bulletized), followed by a short discussion/explanation of each conclusion. Each conclusion represents the evaluators' positive/negative judgments about the facts discussed in Section B.
 - D. Recommendations: Each recommendation should also be numbered and concisely stated, usually corresponding to the major conclusions, possibly followed by a short discussion of each. The recommendations refer to future actions USAID, other donors, or participants should consider in future related development activity, or in the same activity (if continuing).
 - E. Lessons Learned: Where the evaluator believes there are notable lessons learned that might be incorporated into future projects, this should also be mentioned. Lessons should also be numbered, stated concisely (bulletized), if necessary, followed by very brief discussions. Usually lessons related to some conclusion or recommendation in the previous sections.
 - F. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Usually placed at the front of the report): The summary should consist of an absolute maximum of 3 pages, single spaced, double spaced between paragraphs. It should include a simple statement of the purpose of the evaluation, and very short description of the program. The focus is primarily on the most important numbered (bulletized) conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned, without much discussion. This section selectively highlights only the most important things found in the evaluation report.
 -
 - G. Success Stories: If the evaluator identifies any striking "success stories" from either of these activities, please include concise summaries either in sidebars in the text of the report or a separate annex.

Annex 2 – Evaluation Design and Timeline

The evaluation is designed to respond to the key questions provided by USAID/Nicaragua within the time and human resources provided for the activity and elicited information from distinct sources, including:

- **Participating CSOs.** The evaluation design interviewed over 80% of organizations participating in the ISP program and 90% of those in the Legal Framework one. Because work with the Emerging Organizations in the ISP program is just beginning, five out of the group of ten selected organizations were been selected for interviews. The interview schedule was organized utilizing the following priorities and criteria:

Interviews with organizations that formed the original core in both programs were selected at the beginning of the evaluation process. They had the longest experience with the programs and represented a distinct group of organizations, having received two distinct types of services from USAID ;

The core groups of both programs were prioritized because they received the bulk of services and resources; and

Youth organizations were given a special emphasis given the potential they have in future programming and their ability to easily replicate their work and reach out to a broad number of youth.

- **Key Informants.** In order to better understand the context of the programs and the current situation of civil society in Nicaragua, the evaluation design includes interviews with key informants from diverse sectors. These persons will be selected to include sector representatives who may include NGOs, faith-based organizations, universities, media, business and agriculture. Key civil society leaders who may provide important insights on the current situation and suggestions for the future are also included in this group. In selecting individuals for this group of informants, the following characteristics were considered:
 1. Broad political representation;
 2. Recognized as opinion leaders; and/or
 3. Credible to the public in general or specialists in their areas.
- **Comparative CSOs.** The evaluation design includes interviews with CSO representatives from organizations that have not participated in any of the programs being evaluated. Although the sample size is too small to serve as a control group, information gathered from these interviews will give some insights as to the importance of the activities currently provided by the two programs being evaluated.
- **International Donors.** A small group of international donors were interviewed to gain their understanding of the current socio-political context and their perception of CSO's needs and opportunities.

The Evaluation Design includes the following components:

- Document review
 1. Official program documents including RFAs, program descriptions, modifications;

2. Program documents, including quarterly and trip reports and training materials and program handbooks;
 3. Relevant publications regarding civil society and the socio-political context in Nicaragua; and
 4. USAID documentation including previous USAID Democracy and Governance assessments and current five-year strategy.
- Briefings
 1. USAID DG team members
 2. AED/MSI representatives, both in Washington DC and in Managua
 3. AED/ICNL representatives, both in Washington DC and in Managua
 - Interviews
 1. Interviews with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) representatives, including staff, board members, or other leaders or clients.
 2. Interviews with key informants as described above.
 3. Interviews with a sample of a comparative group of five organizations that have not received assistance or participated in the program.
 4. Interviews with other international donors.
 - Group Discussions

We invited 10 organizations from the ISP program and 5 from SFCS for a discussion that will seek to identify lessons learned and best practices. We will utilize an appreciative inquiry approach during these meetings.

- Data Analysis

The guidance provided by USAID/Nicaragua included four Key Evaluation Questions that form the basis of the evaluation. From these, interview questionnaires were developed to elicit both broad and open responses and specific and concrete ones. A questionnaire was subsequently developed that was field tested with the first three organizations and then fine-tuned for use in the remaining interviews. In addition, two other questionnaires will be developed, one for key informants and a second for the emerging organizations group who has just recently begun participating in the ISP program.

Information gathered from the interviews will be organized to be able to compare and aggregate information, identify trends, and generate initial conclusions and recommendations. These conclusions may be tested, complemented and cross-checked during second round of interviews, with key informants and/or during the two group meetings to be held towards the end of the field work.

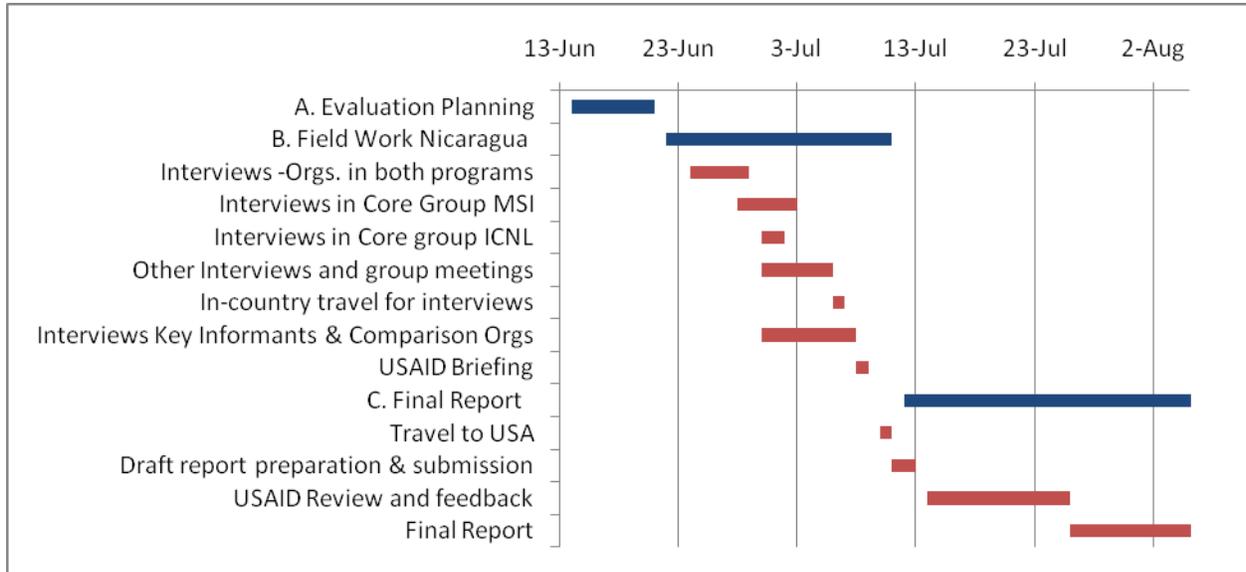
Data will be disaggregated, if relevant, by:

5. Types of organizations – DG, Women, Youth, Legal, other sector
6. Time when they entered the programs – Original groups, Second Tier Core

7. Type of assistance received - Technical assistance, Grants, Conferences/workshops
8. Type of Participants (gender, sector)

- Time Line

The evaluation is structured into three distinct phases: planning, field work and final report preparation and can be graphically depicted as shown below:



Annex 3 - Interview guide for CSOs

Organización _____ Entrevistado _____

Fecha _____ Entrevistador/a _____

Preguntas para las organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil Socias que participaron en los programas ISP y Marco Legal

1. ¿Cual considera usted que es el estado actual de la sociedad civil nicaragüense?
2. ¿Cómo categoriza usted el universo de la sociedad civil nicaragüense?
3. ¿Que necesidades tienen en estos momentos las organizaciones de la sociedad civil a) a su interior y en relación con el medio legal en que se desempeña? B) Individualmente y como colectivo?
4. En relación con las necesidades que usted nombra, ¿hasta qué punto responden estos dos programas a estas necesidades?
5. De uno a diez, que prioridad/importancia tiene para su organización estos dos programas - **fortalecimiento institucional y el marco legal** (siendo 1 lo más bajo y 10 la prioridad más alta)
 - a. Programa capacidad Institucional
1 _____ 10
 -
 - b. Programa Marco legal
• 1 _____ 10
6. Explíquenos por favor su calificación
- 7.Cuál fue su experiencia con las sub-donaciones o acuerdos de colaboración?

8. ¿Han habido cambios en su institución que son resultado directo de la participación en estas actividades? ¿En referencia a estos cambios, piensa usted que se pueden mantener vigentes a través del tiempo? ¿De qué forma han impactado estos programas en la sostenibilidad de su organización?
9. Por favor mencione dos de los mejores aspectos/ características/ componentes de estos dos programas y dos que menos le gustaron.
10. ¿Si tuviera usted la posibilidad de ajustar/mejorar estas actividades que cambios haría?
11. Con relación al aspecto de sostenibilidad financiera, ¿que tipo de programa sería útil para su organización?
12. ¿Cómo interactúa su organización con la situación política actual y como podrá afectar a su organización el ambiente electoral que se avecina? Bajo este ambiente político, ¿que oportunidades ve usted?
13. Recordando todo lo que paso durante el programa, ¿en qué momento se sintió más orgulloso de su trabajo y por qué?

Annex 4 – List of Organizations in the Institutional Strengthening Program

Target ISP Organizations:

Formal organizations include the following:

1. Movimiento por Nicaragua
2. Comisión Permanente de Derechos Humanos (CPDH)
3. Hagamos Democracia
4. Etica y Transparencia (April 2010)
5. Grupo FUNDEMOS
6. Fundacion Nicaragua Nuestra
7. PROJUSTICIA
8. CINCO
9. Movimiento Juvenil Nicaraguaita (MJN)
10. Red Local
11. Cáritas
12. ASODEL
13. Congreso Permanente de Mujeres Empresarias de Nicaragua (CPMEN)
14. ACPRODMUJER (May 2010)
15. Asociación Movimiento de Mujeres de Chinandega
16. FUNDESER
17. EDUQUEMOS
18. Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas (IEEPP)
19. Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro

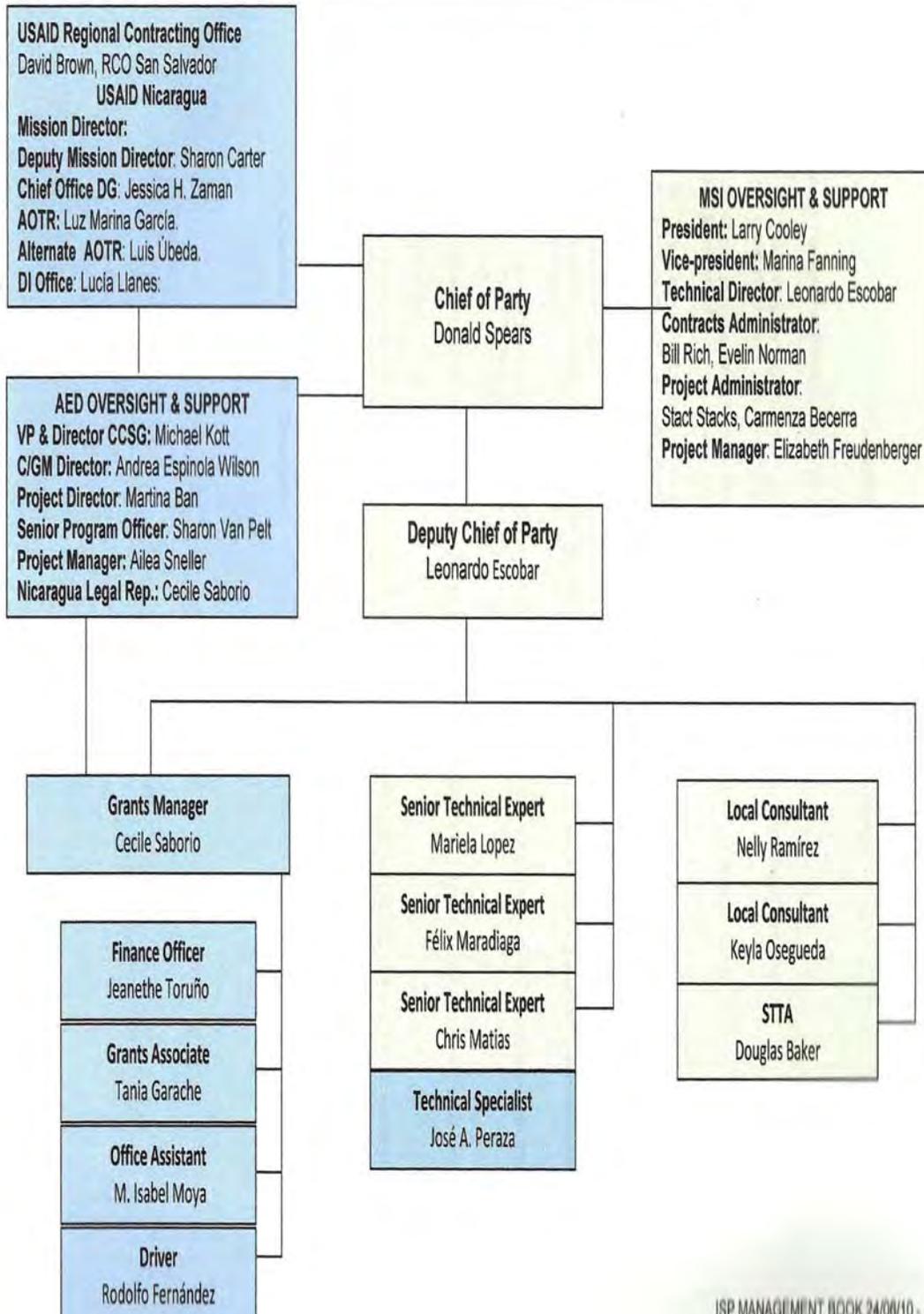
Organizations selected as non-formal – or emerging– include the following:

1. Asociación de Jóvenes de Mateare
2. Generación ATLAS
3. Instituto Nicaragüense de Capacitación y estudios Juveniles
4. Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres
5. Movimiento contra el Abuso Sexual
6. Movimiento por una Cultura Política Diferente
7. Asociación de Profesionales Responsabilidad social
8. Novelistas y Escritores Internacional
9. Centro de Apoyo a las Misiones
10. Centro de Estudios e Información de la Mujer Multiétnica

Annex
5

USAID INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

Organizational Chart AED/MSI



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Annex 6

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions –Nicaraguan Civil Society

- 1. A large number of organizations described the current environment as increasingly polarized and politicized.** Organizations that are seeking to remain neutral are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. Government has adopted an “if you are not for us you are against us” attitude.
- 2. Continuous public attack and intimidation.** Many of them, especially those in the DG sector, described the environment as one of intimidation and public attack that seeks to reduce their legitimacy and credibility.
- 3. Loss of spaces for action.** Organizations described having continuously smaller spaces for action. The government’s support for the CPCs is creating a new model of citizen participation. As the government promotes the CPC’s as the legitimate spaces for civil society participation, this parallel system creates disorientation and tensions among traditional CSOs, especially those that are not seen as supportive of government actions.
- 4. A lack of identity** as growing concern in many Nicaraguan CSOs interviewed. This attribute relates especially to those organizations that have promoted citizen participation using the regulatory frameworks provided by laws that specifically opened spaces for organized citizen participation.
- 5. Administrative and taxation barriers** have been used to delay or impede CSOs who are seen against government, including the granting of legal personalities, approval of financial reports and demanding of paperwork not called for in current regulations.
- 6. Weakened political parties.** Respondents also referred to the profound crisis within political parties which has impeded an effective counterbalance to the government. With weak political parties, civil society is playing an increasingly important role in defending the constitution and the rule of law nationally and locally.
- 7. Women organizations.** Several women’s organizations have found themselves portrayed as opposing the government due to their support to the case of Zoilamerica and their fight to regain the right of women to therapeutic abortion. Interviewees describe numerous cases of loss of access to the municipal arena and intimidation to local women’s groups who cooperate with them.
- 8. Precarious economic situation.** Many CSOs described a precarious economic situation, with reduced levels of funding available and fewer donors. Many of the organizations interviewed and key informants noted that CSOs, mostly those in the DG and human rights areas are barely surviving due to reductions in support from international donors

9. **Internal weaknesses.** Many political leaders migrated to the sector with personal goals and objectives compromising the independence and autonomy of the sector. Some CSOs are not democratic, inclusive or transparent in their internal operations. Key informants identified these weaknesses as important to correct.
10. **Fragmented.** A common adjective used to describe civil society was that it was fragmented, disordered, divided and ineffective. Respondents noted that it had lost its vision and needed to regain its focus on its objectives. The competition for scarce resources contributes to each organization acting in isolation to obtain donor support.
11. **Strong capacities.** CSOs highlighted the fact that under this turmoil their voices and actions have been able to promote respect for human rights, for democratic institutions, and the constitution. Many of these organizations have acquired skills and capacity over the past years and are able to effectively reach out to the public and the media. CSO's leaders pointed to the Civicus survey where CSOs credibility is high, fourth on the list.
12. **Alliances and networking.** Some of them acknowledge that the current crisis has served to bring them together and seek ways to work together, although reflecting that their voice and actions are weak compared to the actual need. CSO initiative to promote primary elections within the opposition political parties to help identify new leadership and strengthen democratic practices and values is an example of these types of efforts. As a result, CSOs interviewed are searching ways to create alliances among themselves, are revisiting their vision and mission to adjust to the new paradigm, and are developing new strategies through which to achieve their objectives.

Recommendations –Nicaraguan Civil Society

1. **Maintain the current focus on strengthening civil society organizations.** Given the political environment and the threats to democratic values and institutions, it is critical for USAID to maintain its support for Nicaraguan CSOs. This will permit civil society to better navigate the current crisis and effectively play its role.
2. **Expand geographic distribution.** Work with organizations that are distributed geographically across the country to have a more plural representation of civil society organizations as partners.
3. **Focus on youth.** Continue with the focus on youth – engage, support and develop youth organizations and leadership.
4. **Expand representation of other sectors.** Bring into the program organizations that serve to meet social needs and are less of a political target.
5. **Improve the image and awareness of civil society contributions.** Produce a study that identifies and shows the value and clear contributions of civil society towards meeting the gaps that exists in public services and the value added of the DG NGOs. Disseminate results widely. This study should be done by a credible Latin American research institution and/or think tank.

6. **Alliances.** In a difficult political environment, alliances towards a common goal are important. International donors such as USAID should explore collaborative efforts with other donors and encourage grantees to diversify their funding for program activities. Take this opportunity to build a new public plural imagine.
7. **Cross sector activities.** Explore possibilities to implement cross sector activities across teams to reinforce citizen participation and democratic values in areas such as education, environment or food security.
8. **Communication.** Develop capacity within CSOs to generate public opinion through messages that are relevant, appropriate and positively engage government officials and take the opportunity to encourage the participation of new public opinion leaders.
9. **Renovation of CSO Leadership.** Findings indicate a need for civil society leaders who bring new visions with the skill to interpret the political environment in which civil society evolves, are sensible to citizen's needs and interests, do not have a partisan tie and practice democratic values. Programs and activities that help identify and train new leaders will contribute to this renovation.
10. **International Sphere.** It is vital to support Nicaraguan CSOs develop international relations and linkages. These will permit them to generate international support for their work and help strengthen values and ideals recognized internationally.
11. **Risk Assessment.** Organizations are struggling to cope with the challenges and opportunities at this time. To succeed, they will need to continuously gauge the environment, assess the risks, identify possible scenarios and make adjustments to stay on-course and to avoid problems. USAID can help provide CSOs with technical assistance to increase CSOs capacity in this area.
12. **Programs** – Extend the two programs beyond the election period. If possible avoid drastic changes in both program managements and oversight as this will help to build a stronger team that will make the best possible decisions in the months to come. Seek to make adjustments and changes swiftly as the country enters elections and a transition to a new governmental administration.

Conclusions - Institutional Strengthening Program - ISP - AED/MSI

1. **Resources** – The scarce amount of funding is putting pressure on organizations to survive, especially those related to DG activities.
2. **Resource Development.** Already there are examples where organizations have been able to obtain resources with the support of the ISP program highlighting the impact this training can have..
3. **Stronger Organizations – internal.** A significant number of CSOs interviewed indicated improvements within their organizations as a result of their involvement in the program.

4. **Stronger Organizations - external.** Several organizations noted improvements in communication skills, including a focus on use of new media and managing the media have been valued by the organizations receiving this training.
5. **Increasing the menu of services** – Within the context of organization development, CSOs expressed need in continuing to develop improved communication strategies with the outside communities and financial and accounting systems.
6. **Increased level of confidence** – Many of the organizations expressed increased level of confidence in preparing documents that needed approval by government entities. These included legal personalities and by-laws.
7. **Beyond Organizational Development** – There is a pent-up demand for supporting activities that are more content-based and go beyond the current institutional strengthening focus of the program.
8. **Alliances.** CSOs have valued the opportunity to meet and get to know other CSOs through the diverse program activities and some of them have already made important alliances through the ISP program.
9. **Adjusting to growth.** The program maintained a management structure of a small program despite the inherent differences a larger program requires.
10. **Fixed Obligation Grants (FOG).** The management of grants is excellent. The component is managed as a result (Result 9) but is not as integrated into the technical component as it could be. FOGS are based on reimbursement of expenses and requires CSOs to front scarce financial resources that place additional pressures on organizations that are already facing financial difficulties.

11. Program Design.

- **Matching program purpose with design.** The initial activities and results included in the program design were important but not sufficient to achieve the purpose of *“Increased institutional capacity in civil society to mobilize constituencies, participate in policy and decision-making, and exercise oversight over public institutions”*.
 - **Changes in program oversight.** Changes within the USAID/Nicaragua DG Team represented an opportunity to review program strategy and better understand and communicate its design and objectives throughout the agency.
 - **Leader with Associate.** Having two different contractors implementing the program under the Leader with Associates mechanism creates the need to integrate two distinct organizations in a project.
1. **Framework and Tools.** The ISP program has developed and structured a thoughtful and organized system for providing organizational development services.
 2. **Professional team and quality of service.** Organizations interviewed gave high marks for the quality of technical assistance and workshops with few exceptions.

3. **Demand for services.** The program has generated a demand for services that it finds sometimes difficult to meet with its current level of staffing. This has been complicated by the nature of its key staff that travels regularly in and out of the country.

Recommendations Institutional Strengthening Program - ISP - AED/MSI

1. **Resources.** Maintain the same level of grants in the second round of funding and provide incentives for alliances between formal and emerging organizations to promote joint action and learning.
2. **Resource Development.** Increase training opportunities in resource development, fundraising, and program design.
3. **Stronger Organizations – internal.** Continue to the focus on organizational development in the current areas as these are strengthening CSOs and are producing desirable results. Continue both one-on-one technical assistance and workshops.
Sharing of Best Practices - Offer forums where organizations can share their best practices with each other as a way to generate solutions to common problems and promote networking. This will be especially important to the emergent groups
4. **Stronger Organizations – external.** Strengthen the area of developing institutional communication strategies and formulating better communication messages.
5. **Increasing the menu of services.** Expand the menu of services to include new ones such strengthening financial and accounting systems.
6. **Increased level of confidence.** With the end of the Nicaraguan government fiscal year, services that provide guidance on meeting financial and legal requirements are especially relevant.
7. **Beyond Organizational Development.** Under the current state of Nicaraguan civil society it is urgent to provide training in technical areas to CSOs that are strengthening their internal capacities. The new World Learning program will bring this opportunity.
8. **Adjusting to growth.** Establish mechanisms to improve time responsiveness between program and clients and seek ways to assure a joint understanding of timeframes and expectations with all CSO partners.
Integration. Continue to improve the integration between grants and the technical components to improve impact and efficiency.
Local capacity development. Explore ways to begin building this capacity within the CSO community or through other institutions within current program activities.
9. **Grants –** Reduce financial burden on CSOs. FOG mechanisms should not be used with all CSOs. Many of the current ISP partners have managed international funding and are able to respond to traditional grant mechanisms. Explore alliances or

funding consortia as a way to expand grant mechanisms and offer options if possible.

10. Alliances. Continue to promote networking and alliances, and promote linkages with national and international organizations. During times of vulnerability and crisis, international relationships and linkages among CSOs are especially important.

11. Program Design. Clarify within USAID the expectations and reach for the ISP program. This is an important program at a time when civil society is being threatened by a changing political environment. Its importance, impacts and limitations need to be well understood.

Recommendations for the short term:

- **Timeframe.** Expand the program through August 2012 as organizational development responds to CSO needs, was rated as high in importance by the majority of organizations interviewed and the program plays a critical role in sustaining civil society in a challenging political context.
- **Increase funding level.** Explore the possibility of expanding resources for small grants under this program. The funds available for grants is smaller than what was awarded in the first round when there were only ten organizations; today there are 30 potential grantees.
- **Program Strategy.** Maintain program strategy with its focus on organizational development, especially communication strategies through technical assistance, workshops and grants. If expansion is possible new activities could include:
 - a. Increase training opportunities in resource development, fundraising, and program design;
 - b. Adjust program structure to respond to program needs and improve integration among its components;
 - c. Facilitate linkages to other resources to respond to CSOs needs beyond the scope of the ISP and promote increased sharing of best practices and networking.
 - d. Explore the possibility of expanding resources for small grants under this program.

Supportive Framework program SFP- AED/ICNL

Conclusions - Supportive Framework program - AED/ICNL

1. **Resources.** Although the grant amounts were limited in nature, they produced great results and met the needs of CSOs to carry out activities that gave them visibility and presence in the field.
2. **Increased capacity.** The program created critical legal knowledge and expertise among lawyers, civil society leaders and CSOs that will permit them to defend the rights of freedom of association and convey its importance as a core value to democracy.

3. **Role in defending democratic values.** The program effectively responded to the threat presented by the government's effort to put in place a manual that restricted CSO ability to receive funds and carry out its work with no apparent negative consequences.
4. **Alliance building.** Through the SFP program, CSOs gained experience in the power of working together and mobilized effectively for joint action.
5. **International Networking.** The International Conference succeeded in building awareness of successful solutions to similar problems facing Nicaraguan civil society and in establishing international linkages with these organizations.
6. **Early warning response.** The program's capacity to detect the Manual as a threat demonstrated its ability to serve as an early warning system with capacity for quick response.
7. **Effective role in influencing public opinion and the National Assembly.** Through its outreach to legislators and effective radio programs, the SFP program raised awareness of value and issues related to freedom of association.
8. **Effective Selection of CSOs.** The program brought together a well-selected group of committed CSOs that have coalesced into a de facto coalition.
9. **Small grants** served to deepen the legal knowledge in CSOs by putting it into practice through workshops, fairs, research studies and town hall meetings.
10. **Knowledge replication** – the training of trainers approach helped to multiply the numbers of citizens and organizations aware and informed of the right of free association.
11. **Synergies.** There is potential for AED to encourage coordination among the two programs it implements in Nicaragua. There are five organizations that receive services from both programs with additional interchanges of information possible between the two.

Recommendations - Supportive Framework program - AED/ICNL

1. **Resources.** Maintain program strategy with its effective use of small grants.
2. **Increased capacity.** Maintain program strategy with its key capacity building activities; training, research, small grants and conferences.
3. **Role in defending democratic values.** This is the only program consistently working in the area of freedom of association and it is achieving important objectives and should be expanded
4. **Alliances.** Continue to promote networking and alliances, and promote linkages with national and international organizations. During times of vulnerability and crisis, international relationships among CSOs are especially important and the international conference was especially so.
5. **Developing a university curriculum to gain sustainability.** To maintain the achievements of the program to date in terms of CSOs ability to respond quickly

to threats, act as a coalition and increase the knowledge base it will be important to develop a university curriculum that will contribute to consolidating the issue in the Nicaraguan Law Schools will contribute towards achieving this.

6. **Judicial actors.** Look for ways to educate, inform and elicit the interest of judicial authorities.
7. **Information management.** Considering the importance of outreach and training, the program will benefit from putting in place a simple database that will provide them information regarding the number of CSOs trained, their location and record number of citizens attending the workshops according to gender, municipalities where training took place and the type of training provided. Such a database will help management decisions.
8. **Synergies.** Improve Coordination with MSI and the AED. Both, the SFP and the ISP programs will benefit if all implementers shared plans and interacted more frequently. Given the vulnerability organizations are facing at this time, coordination of both programs could facilitate technical assistance and if needed legal support to CSOs that face problems with their legal papers or need guidance with specific problems.

Recommendations for the short term:

- **Timeframe.** Expand the program's time period extends the program through March 2012, beyond the election period and sufficiently enough to build CSO capacity to place freedom of association as a right that is understood and recognized by citizens as an important value.
- **Program Strategy and Structure.** Maintain program strategy with its key activities: training, research, small grants and conferences. Expand stakeholders to include judicial actors. Look for ways to educate, inform and elicit the interest of judicial authorities. Seek to adjust program structure by strengthening local leadership. If expansion is possible new activities could include:
 - a. Providing legal assistance to those CSOs that have encountered problems or are having difficulties meeting requirements;
 - b. Publications that can be understood by the general public on the freedom of association rights;
 - c. A database that accumulates relevant information of its network, participants (by gender, organization and geographic location) and tools developed by the CSOs;
 - d. A university curriculum that consolidates the issue in Nicaraguan Law Schools; and
 - e. Increase funding for small grants. The funds have been well used, replicate knowledge, and have allowed the program to reach beyond Managua.

Annex 7

Interview List

	Program Participating CSOs	Names
1	Asociación de Jóvenes de Mateare - AJONA	Luis Balladares
2	Asociación de Mujeres de Chinandega	María Castillo
3	Asociación para la Supervivencia y el Desarrollo Local-ASODE	Lic. Pedro Medina
4	CAMM - Centro de Misiones de Matagalpa	Jenny Pérez José Pargon
5	CARITAS Nicaragua	Padre Mario Sandoval- Eugenia Cruz Borja
6	Centro de Derechos Constitucionales - CDC	Marcos Carmona-Nina Lucia Monje
7	Centro de Investigación de la Comunicación - CINCO	Sofía Montenegro
8	Centro Permanente de Derechos Humano - CPDH	Sr. Marcos Carmona
9	Congreso Permanente de Mujeres	Ximena Ramírez
10	Coordinadora Civil – CC León y Managua	Irwin Dávila
11	Eduquemos	Ernesto Robledo
12	Ética y Transparencia	Cesar Martínez
13	Fundación Esquipulas - FES	Cheyra Torres
14	Fundación Nicaragua Nuestra	Claudia Paniagua
15	FUNDEMOS	Patricia Mayorga
16	Fundación para el Desarrollo Socioeconómico Rural - Fundeser	René Romero
17	Generación Atlas	Kenneth Ybarra
18	Grupo Pro justicia	José Antonio Centeno
19	Hagamos Democracia - HADEMOS	Pedro Xavier Solís Cuadra
20	Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticos Publicas	Simeón Rizo B.
21	Instituto Nicaragüense de Capacitación y Estudios Juveniles (INCEJU)	Marcos Roberto
22	Movimiento Juvenil Nicaragüita	Donald Muñoz
23	Movimiento por Nicaragua	María Gabriela Berrios
24	Novelistas y Escritores Internacional - PEN	Juan Carlos Vélchez - Misael Duarte
26	Red Nicaragüense por la Democracia y el Desarrollo Local -RED LOCAL	Omar Treminio

Comparative Group

	CSOs and International Donors	Names
1	Asociación Nicaragüense de Instituciones de Micro finanzas - ASOMIF	René Romero
2	International Cooperation Canadá	Jean Luc Labelle
3	Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos -	Bayardo Izaba

	CENIDH	
4	Delegación Unión Europea	Isabel Tercero
5	Delegación Unión Europea	Patrick Reboud
6	Fundación Mejía Godoy	Fátima Real
7	Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social - FUNIDES	Mario Arana
8	Fundación para el Desarrollo - FUPADE	Juan Francisco Rodríguez
9	Instituto Republicano Internacional - IRI	Miguel Hernández
10	Solidez	María F. Herrera/Humberto Gonzales
11	Consejo Nacional de Ganaderos - CONAGAN	Roland Blandón

Key Informants

Civil Society Organizations

		Names
1	Asociación Nacional de Periodistas	Roger Suarez
2	Decano Facultad de Derecho; Universidad Americana	Alejandro Aguilar
3	Ex-directora Red Local	Damaris Ruiz
4	Ex-Legislator	Julio Icaza
5	Federación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Nicaragua - FONG	Julio López Miranda
6	Federación Democrática de Maestros de Nicaragua	Ruth Cuadra
7	Fundemos	Alberto Saborío
8	Instituto Nicaragüense de Desarrollo	Lily Berrios
9	Nuevo Diario	Danilo Aguirre
10	Radio Católica	Padre Rolando Álvarez

Management and Technical

Organization

		Nombre
1	Communications consultant; AED/MSI	Mariela López
2	Deputy Director ISP Program; AED/MSI	Leonardo Escobar
3	Director ISP Program; AED/MSI	Donald
4	Organizational Development Consultant; AED/MSI	Félix Madariaga
5	Organizational Development Consultant; AED/MSI	Chris Matías
6	In country Legal Adviser AED/ICNL	Claudia Guadamuz
7	AED/MSI	Tania Garache
8	Grants Manager AED	Cecile Saborío
9	Senior Program Adviser AED	Sharon Van Pelt
10	Vice-President ICNL	Catherine Shea
11	Legal Framework Program Director ICNL	Jocelyn Nieva

12	AOTR - Institutional Strengthening Program AED/MSI	Luz Marina García
13	AOTR - Legal Frame Work program AED/ICNL	Luis Ubeda
14	Democracy Office Consultant	Jan Emmert
15	Chief, Rule of Law Division USAID/DCHA/DG 2.	Brad Fujimoto

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