

**INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND CITIZEN  
PARTICIPATION PROGRAM (ISCP)  
FOR THE NICARAGUAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NNA)**

**Quarterly Report**  
**(May-July, 2000)**

USAID/RFSUNY/NNA  
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September 1, 2000

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**Introduction**

As a result of the *Plan Maestro* and *Plan Estratégico de Tecnología de Información* (*Master Plan and Strategic Information Technology Plan*) technical assistance was provided to the Nicaraguan National Assembly (NNA) through USAID's Nicaragua Legislative Strengthening Project (NLSP) from October, 1997 to January, 2000. In a follow-on contract, the International Development Group of the State University of New York (SUNY/IDG) began a second program on February 1, 2000 addressing three areas of legislative strengthening:

- Improved quality of the law and legislative functions through a program of legislative technical assistance and training
- Greater opportunities for public participation in the legislative process
- Institutionalization of the modernization process within the NNA

The purpose of this program is to provide technical assistance to the Nicaraguan National Assembly (NNA) in reinforcing legislators' capability to enact legislation and to build mutually accepted channels for citizen input in national legislation and debate. The USAID Mission's Strategic Objective (SO) stresses support for *More political participation, transparency and compromise* and the Intermediate Results *Legislature addresses key national issues* and *Government decision-making based on greater citizen participation*. The overall mission of this second phase of the program –through its 16 activity areas grouped under the three goals above- is to strengthen the capacity of the NNA to pass legislation that is fairer and of better quality, and that benefits Nicaragua and its citizenry in general, at the same time strengthening the relationship between citizens, the press and the NNA.

**Administrative Actions**

As described below, during this quarter, SUNY/IDG hired Lic. Federico Rostrán to serve as coordinator of the *Oficina de Participación Ciudadana* (OPC) and two Junior Programmers to work and receive training at the SUNY/Nicaragua office. Lic. Luis Vega will join the project on August 1, 2000 as coordinator of the LIP initiative and related legislative assistance activities.

Bids were received for the acquisition of equipment for the NNA Training Center/Conference Room. Items were purchased from a total of 11 vendors. GBM of Nicaragua has provided computers for the public workstations, expanded SUNY/Nicaragua office spaces, NNA Conference Room/Training Center and NNA press area. The firm Merinco, S.A. provided the cabling and network connections for same. The beneficiaries of this equipment and connections are the many NNA staff, officials and Deputies who use Assembly services and who want to take advantage of the new space that is suitable for training, meetings, conferences and other types of events. The public will also benefit from the public workstations that provide direct connection to legislative information.

Similar actions were taken to continue equipping the expanded SUNY/Nicaragua project office with regard to furniture, networked computer workstations, photocopier, telephone lines, internet service and office supplies. Staff from the LIP (*Programa de Pasantías Legislativas*) and CRU (*Oficina de Participación Ciudadana, OPC*) will use all these resources during the incubation phase of these two fundamental components as outlined in our proposal.

## **II. ISCP Quarterly Results by Goal Area and Activity**

### **Goal 1. Improved quality of the law and legislative functions through a program of legislative technical assistance and training**

Activities:

- 1.1 Legislative Internship Program (LIP)
- 1.2 Database of Local and International Experts to Draft Reports and Testify Before Committees
- 1.3 Intensive Training for NNA Deputies and Staff in Legislative Bill-Drafting and Budget Analysis
- 1.4 Civil Society Organization (CSO) Directory
- 1.5 Deputy Orientation Program in 2001
- 1.6 International Conference on Legislative Strengthening; Study Tours for Deputies and Professional Staff

**1.1 Legislative Internship Program (LIP).** This activity suffered a delay during the present quarter due to the fact that the person selected to head this initiative, Dra. Alcira Irias, turned down the position in late May in order to remain with her current employer. The new coordinator who was then selected, Lic. Luis F. Vega, who will join the SUNY/Nicaragua office on August, 2000. However, we detail below the areas in which we have nonetheless advanced during this quarter.

In order to further develop this activity, which is oriented toward the creation of a non-partisan and neutral legislative research service and which, in the short and medium term, will involve qualified professionals at the level of mentors as well as students in their last

year of study in programs related to legislative work, we have met with the following individuals: Dr. Francisco Fiallos, Vice Rector of the *Universidad Ave María* (formerly *Universidad de Mobile*) and Dr. Patrick Werner. We have also received a letter of commitment from the *Universidad Centroamericana* (UCA) signed by its Rector, in which he states an interest in participating in this project. The COP has reached out in many directions in the academic community in Nicaragua to determine likely candidates to participate in this initiative.

**1.2 Database of Local and International Experts to Draft Reports and Testify Before Committees.** This database of local and international experts will allow the NNA Deputies to know which individuals could advise the NNA in specific areas of legislative interest, present information to NNA committees and submit other useful information for consideration. Inquiries along these lines were made to UCA and *the Universidad Ave María*, and officials from both institutions expressed their desire to support such a data base. These responses do not produce immediate results, since each institution will consult internally in order to provide names of likely participants and contacts. However, we expect to begin building a database with hard data in the coming quarter.

**1.3 Intensive Training for NNA Deputies and Staff in Legislative Bill-Drafting and Budget Analysis.** One step toward completing a series of training events in this regard is the recent completion (9/00) of the NNA Conference Room/Training Center which will provide *an adequate location* to hold such events. Primarily dependent upon international consultants, this training activity will start once we arrange the visit of expert consultants to support the training of NNA Deputies, LIP staff (interns and mentors) and NNA budget staff. Given the recent visit of several Modernization Committee members to the Congressional Research Service of the U.S. Congress in June, enthusiasm for improved research services is high among those members. Important agreements are taking shape with the NNA's *Dirección de Asesoría Legislativa* (Department of Legislative Assistance and Research) headed by Dr. Raúl Palacios, regarding the creation of better research services.

In the area of bill-drafting and legislative research, we expect to utilize the talent of two seasoned experts from the U.S. Library of Congress Congressional Research Service (CRS), Ms. Nina Serafino and Mr. Clay Wellborn. Both fluent in Spanish, Ms. Serafino and Mr. Wellborn met with the Nicaraguan delegation that visited Washington D.C. and the legislative strengthening conference in Wintergreen, Virginia in early June of this year. Ms. Serafino is the author of *Manual Practico: Investigación y Análisis para los Parlamentos* (1997), which should be very useful to the SUNY/Nicaragua projects efforts in this regard, such as training of LIP interns. Mr. Clayborn is a career specialist on issues of national government and is familiar with SUNY/IDG's legislative strengthening projects and the need for better research services in legislatures.

**1.4 Civil Society Organization (CSO) Directory.** With respect to the creation of a Civil Society Directory, meetings were held with the NGO *NDC* (*Centro Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo*) in order to make specific plans to create this directory. We have received a compendium of CSOs in Nicaragua, drawn up by the NGO *CAPRI*. We have also made

plans with SUNY/Nicaragua's own IT consultant and OPC coordinator regarding the design of the database. As planned, SUNY/Nicaragua will draw on existing resources in order to create not just another directory but one specifically designed for use by Deputies.

**1.5 Deputy Orientation Program in 2001.** The orientation program for Deputies who will join the newly elected Assembly in early 2002 will be designed and carried out by the new coordinator for this Goal, Lic. Luis Vega.

**1.6 International Conference on Legislative Strengthening; Study Tours for Deputies and Professional Staff.** Finally, under these activities, a trip was taken to Virginia, USA to participate in the Second International Conference on Legislative Strengthening, held in Wintergreen from June 5-8, 2000. On behalf of the NNA, Dr. Leopoldo Navarro, Dra. María Lourdes Bolaños and Dr. Luis Urbina attended the conference, along with SUNY/IDG's COP Guillermo García, Michael Eddy from USAID/Nicaragua and Tom Van Alstyne from SUNY/IDG in Albany, New York. At this conference Dra. María Lourdes Bolaños gave a presentation in the panel covering the role of NGOs in legislative strengthening and Mr. García presented on the role of technology in legislative strengthening.

This study tour afforded the NNA Deputies many important benefits, such as exposure to the experience and knowledge involved in various areas of legislative strengthening and discussions on what are the main advances and strategies for development. The details of this study tour have been previously submitted to USAID/Nicaragua.

Additionally, in early August SUNY/Nicaragua organized a study tour to Mexico City, Mexico in support of NNA library modernization, described in 3.4 below.

## **Goal 2. Greater Opportunities for Public Participation in the Legislative Process**

Activities:

- 2.1 Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings
- 2.2 Constituent Relations Unit (CRU)
- 2.3 NNA Outreach Activities
- 2.4 Development and Dissemination of Informational Materials about the NNA and its Functions
- 2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training

### **General**

Lic. Federico Rostrán is heading up the specific project activities related to public participation in the legislative process which are concentrated in **Activity 2.2 Constituent Relations Office** (*Oficina de Participación Ciudadana*) and other Goal 2 activities. Work during this quarter focused on a detailed assessment of each one of the five Goal 2 activity areas, planning specific actions and coordinating these actions with

the respective departments in the NNA and CSOs whose work is related to this program's goals.

After interviewing NNA officials, analyzing recent documents regarding the legislative branch, evaluating the content of publications in the media regarding the NNA, studying the SUNY/Nicaragua ISCP Workplan for Year 1, a more detailed workplan for each of the activity areas proposed under Goal 2 was produced. In this 50 page document, we have detailed the goals for each activity, an analysis of the current situation in each area, strengths and weaknesses which will impact the project, our conclusions and recommendations, along with a description of the activities under way to achieve these goals, the estimated benefits and the disadvantages and advantages of carrying out the recommended activities. This information was organized on Microsoft Project.

As an initial activity, SUNY/Nicaragua made a detailed assessment and analysis of the main actions contemplated in this Goal, with the intention of formulating an *ad-hoc* work plan. To this end, work meetings were held with Assembly officials as well as leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs), analyzing the content of NNA publications, the strengths and weaknesses in the NNA's press and information dissemination areas, along with the advantages and disadvantages resulting from legislative strengthening activities. An assessment was also made of the *División de Divulgación y División de Prensa* (Information Dissemination and Press Divisions) of the NNA, in which it is recommended that new spaces for communication be developed, services for journalists be improved, training be developed for members of the NNA press area and specialized equipment be acquired.

**2.1 Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings.** One of the objectives of this activity is to coordinate the efforts made by the NNA and CSOs to create more opportunity for public participation in legislative debate through public hearings or town meetings (*cabildos*). SUNY/Nicaragua has met with the leaders of *NDC* and *Hagamos Democracia* to develop activities together that support more citizen participation. At the end of May, the COP and OPC coordinator met with Sra. Violeta Granera de Sandino, Executive Director of the CSO *Fundemos*, with the goal of getting a better sense of the work that organization does in the area of citizen participation. SUNY/Nicaragua also explained to Sra. Granera de Sandino the range of activities that SUNY/IDG aims to complete in the second phase of its legislative strengthening project. *Fundemos* has extensive experience in managing public meetings with members of the assembly and can play an important role in the public hearings to be developed by this project.

**2.2 Constituent Relations Unit (CRU) or Oficina de Participación Ciudadana, (OPC).** After doing a careful evaluation of experiences and knowledge to date, three existing NNA staff members were selected as candidates to work in the SUNY/Nicaragua project office in the areas that fall under Goal 2. The Modernization Committee is still in the final stages of evaluating these three individuals, of whom two will be incorporated into the project. This staff will be trained in the use of different technical resources, assistance activities to the citizenry of Nicaragua and will support the carrying out of

activities under 2.1 Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings, 2.2. Creation of the *Oficina de Participación Ciudadana* and 2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training.

As part of the OPC's functions, we are designing a mechanism to communicate with the citizenry through the NNA web page, and this will be administrated by the OPC staff. COP Guillermo García and Lic. Federico Rostrán, the OPC coordinator, have worked on the overall design of the internet aspects of the citizen participation initiatives. The idea is to allow citizens access to the NNA from their computer, whether they are at home, work or school. SUNY/Nicaragua's Information Technology consultant, Mr. Rodolfo Calderón, has begun developing two pieces of the internet connection (Virtual Parliament) between the Assembly and the citizenry of Nicaragua. The *Registration Module* allows management of those individuals participating in the services offered by the Virtual Parliament, and the *Discussion Forum* which allows citizens to participate in public forums on current issues. Lic. Rostrán is developing a monthly publication entitled "Assembly On-line" in order to share information on the SUNY/USAID/NNA project within the Assembly.

**2.3 NNA Outreach Activities.** Activities that allow social communication with the electorate require ample participation and commitment on the part of NNA Deputies. To this end, SUNY/Nicaragua is organizing training workshops that give Deputies much information on the methods and importance of public participation and its relationship to strengthening the legislative branch. We have also developed the focus and content of an informational bulletin for NNA Deputies, officials and members of the press in order to spread news about the NNA modernization project's activities and its benefits. Our expectation is that Deputies will be anxious to participate in same.

**2.4 Development and Dissemination of Informational Materials about the NNA and its Functions.** A visit was made by the COP and OPC coordinator to the NNA's *División de Divulgación e Impresiones* (information and printing division) in order to get a clear idea of the work this office does and evaluate the capacity of same to produce its own informational materials about the NNA. New informational materials (pamphlets, booklets, publications for students of various ages) would be used in the outreach activities in communities and schools. The role of this division in the production of new publications will be determined according to the format and content proposed.

**2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training.** The activities outlined in this area are a key element for the movement toward greater citizen participation, and it is believed that this process will be impossible without a strengthening in the NNA's public information and press area. With this in mind, SUNY/Nicaragua made an assessment in which we detail the resources that should be available to the press area so that NNA staff can do a better job in their role of linking Deputies and members of the press. This assessment also suggests staff training activities and recommends other steps. The goals are to improve the capacity of the press area and its staff to provide more information to the public, give better service to journalists and

other members of the press and take full advantage of the NNA's computer network systems and web page.

In summary, the assessment/diagnostic report for the NNA press area recommends:

- development of new spaces for communication, such as in the NNA web page and in radio and television spots
- improvement of services for journalists and other media to facilitate their work
- acquisition of a new computer system, media equipment, and installation of network points
- training for staff in the use of internet publications and training for the development of an effective communication strategy with the public and the media

Within this general activity, we can distinguish between internal and external aspects. Internal activities will be carried out through OPC staff in conjunction with the NNA press office and the SUNY/Nicaragua project. As outlined above, technical assistance will be provided to the Deputies, NNA officials and staff in order to better deal with the media.

With respect to external activities, we are arranging for work sessions that bring together directors of communication media, journalists and parliamentary observers. As a first example, SUNY/Nicaragua is organizing a multi-day seminar series entitled, "Assembly, Citizen Participation and the Press" that should take place in mid-September, 2000. This event marks the inauguration of the NNA Training Center/Conference Room equipped by SUNY/IDG and also marks the change in leadership of the NNA, as NNA President Dr. Ivan Escobar Fornos is stepping down. The tentative agenda for this seminar series is attached, and will include speakers who are specialized in this topic. The various segments of the seminar series will be oriented toward NNA Deputies, NNA officials in the press and information dissemination areas, journalists and media directors.

### **Goal 3. Institutionalization of the modernization process within the NNA**

Activities:

- 3.1 Power Plants, Network Extensions and Public Access Workstations: Follow-on Components to the New Information System
- 3.2 NNA Deputies' Virtual Office
- 3.3 Design and Implementation of a NNA Training Center
- 3.4 Modernization of the NNA's Javier Aviles Legislative Library
- 3.5 Digital Archive for the NNA

**3.1 Power Plants, Network Extensions and Public Access Workstations: Follow-on Components to the New Information System.** During this quarter, SUNY/Nicaragua began the installation of additional network points in the areas of the library, *Bancadas* (political party offices) and conference room/training center. The location of the public workstations is still pending.

In late May we entertained bids from local vendors for the acquisition of computers and the provision of additional network points for the Assembly and the SUNY/Nicaragua project. The firm Merinco, S.A. will provide 19 additional network points in the following locations:

Offices	Network points	Electrical outlets	Location
<b>NNA Press Office</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Basement, Main Bldg.</b>
<b>NNA Library Office</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Banco de América Bldg.</b>
<b>NNA Documental Archive Office</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7th Floor, Banco de América Bldg.</b>
<b>Public Workstations</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	TBD
<b>NNA Training Center/ Conference Room</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Basement, Banco de América Bldg.</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	

The public workstations (or *cabinas públicas*) have the objective of providing citizens internet access and services provided by the Assembly, such as the publication of existing law and the legislative agenda. The Modernization Committee is considering the installation of 4 workstations within the Assembly, based on these three alternatives:

1. 4 workstations in the lobby of the *Banco de América* building.
2. 4 workstations in the lobby of the main building.
3. 2 workstations in each building.

To date, the Modernization Committee has not made a final determination regarding the location of the public workstations. SUNY/Nicaragua had previously discussed with several Nicaraguan universities the possibility of providing a workstation on campus to facilitate student access to legislative happenings.

However, on another note, the Modernization Committee requested that SUNY/Nicaragua prepare an inventory of activities undertaken to date through USAID and InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) funding, in order to get a clear picture of what future steps could be taken in the technology area. The additional project activities identified were:

1. Creation of offices for NNA Deputies (building)
2. Virtual Office for Deputies (Laptop computers)
3. Transcription system/Debate diary
4. Video on demand system
5. Video conferencing system
6. RILCA- Central American Legislative Information Network
7. Budget oversight system
8. Organizational development/staff development
9. Updating of Nicaraguan National Assembly's Internal Rules
10. Creation of a library fund
11. Installation of a press room

12. Technological equipment
13. Modernize the infrastructure of the computer systems office
14. UPS (uninterrupted power supply) for the *Banco de América* building/ Electrical plant for the main building
15. Acquisition of printing equipment.
16. Creation of permanent external technical support

Another action taken to support the long-term benefits of the information technology system was SUNY/Nicaragua's hiring of two Junior Programmers, Ms. María José Monterrey (*Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería*) and Ms. Miriam Soraya Arias Ruiz (*Universidad Católica*), to work and train with our technical staff. Both were trained in development tools such as Lotus Notes (installation and administration, basic programming, Lotus Scripts) with the help of existing NNA computer systems staff. These two individuals have assisted in the following areas:

- Preparation of the NNA library's diagnostic report
- Evaluation of the existing NNA library computer systems
- Preparation of the Training Plan for staff at the NNA library
- Preparation of the criteria used to solicit vendor bids for equipment to be purchased for the NNA library
- Development of a document creation and management system
- Review of the databases for discussion for a and user list for the internet access with the Assembly (Virtual Parliament/Assembly On-line)
- Taking of inventory of equipment acquired for political party offices, internet workstations and other sites

**3.2 NNA Deputies' Virtual Office.** With respect to the Virtual Office initiative for the NNA Deputies, SUNY/IDG has contacted providers such donors as IBM Corporation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Toshiba International Foundation, and The SONY Foundation. To date, two unsuccessful responses were received, and SUNY/IDG continues to seek a donor in this regard.

**3.3 Design and Implementation of a NNA Training Center.** In March, 2000, members of the Modernization Committee suggested a location for this multi-use resource center (basement lobby of the *Banco de América* building). In the following months, this location was changed to another room then being used by NNA Deputies on various committees. However, the location for this component was subsequently changed back to the basement lobby of the *Banco de América* building. The NNA financed and performed the necessary renovations and modifications for the space and SUNY/Nicaragua has provided technical oversight to the design and overall performance of this work. As the Assembly was in recess, the work began on July 15 and concluded in late August, 2000, and the name given to this space was *Sala de Conferencias* (Conference Room). From a variety of local vendors, SUNY/Nicaragua purchased the following equipment for the Sala de Conferencias: 26" television, VCR, projector screen, sound system, video camera, and digital camera. Also purchased were: a projector table, rack for television and VCR, podium, 25 work tables, 30 chairs, a white board, dimmer

lights and minor decorations. The inauguration of the *Sala de Conferencias* is scheduled for September 18-20, 2000 and there will be a conference series entitled “Assembly, Citizen Participation and the Press” in which two international experts will give talks and training through the SUNY/Nicaragua project. This multi-day event also serves as a meeting point for Assembly officials, members of civil society groups and the press to find new ways of working together. This training space will serve the Assembly in the short and long terms, and will solve a dire need for a versatile meeting space.

### **3.4 Modernization of the Javier Aviles Legislative Library.**

During this quarter, we performed an assessment of the current situation of the NNA’s *Javier Avilés* Legislative Library in which we revealed that the resources assigned to this library are scarce, in the last two years less than 20 titles were acquired, the majority of Deputies has not visited the library or is unaware of its location, no book exchanges occur with other institutions and no oversight is given to existing exchange agreements, it is necessary to name a library director, and 100% of the bibliographical material has been catalogued. More detail can be found in the IT consultant’s report (Sp.) attached.

SUNY/Nicaragua organized a visit to the Mexican Congress, with the participation of NNA library staff, a NNA Deputy and our COP, Mr. Guillermo Garcia, in early August. This successful and stimulating study tour took place from July 31- August 4, 2000 and had the following participants:

Dra. María Lourdes Bolaños O., NNA Deputy and Member of the Modernization Committee

Lcda. Fanny Ocampo, Chief of Technical Processes, NNA JA Legislative Library

Lcda. Francis Palacios, Chief of Public Services, NNA JA Legislative Library

Mr. Guillermo García, SUNY/Nicaragua COP

The main objective of the trip to Mexico was the opportunity to evaluate other examples of how to administrate a library system, analyze the work methods of the library in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, sign agreements for inter-library assistance and meet with representatives of the Universidad de Colima, Mexico to discuss the SIABUC software to be used in the NNA.

The delegation was met in Mexico by the Deputy Director of the SUNY/Mexico legislative strengthening project also funded by USAID. Ms. Margarita Seminario was instrumental in arranging top-notch meetings with officials in the Mexican House of Deputies, legislative library and other institutions. The delegation learned about the functions of the lower house with respect to library services from Ruben Recillas, Fernando Franco, Leonardo Bolaños and Rodrigo Montoya. Alfredo Del Valle Espinosa talked to the group about the lower house’s Legislative Modernization Plan and the group also made a protocol visit to the President of the House of Deputies, Dr. Francisco José Paoli Bolio, who will be leaving his post but will be working in an institute dedicated to legislative development that could be of assistance to the SUNY/Nicaragua project.

The major overview of the library of the Mexican lower house was given by Dulce María Lihaut B., the General Director of the Library of Congress of Mexico. Presentations of library research and analysis services were given by Dr. Juan Martín Sandoval, Dr. Jorge González and Mr. Macial Reyes. The library staff provides research services in the areas of finance, social policy and legal topics. The delegation also learned about the intranet and internet services available to the library staff, and several officials explained in detail the technological framework that supports the information management and research functions of the library. A visit was also made to the library's Division of Legislative Documentation, Library Services Unit and Technical Support Unit, where the respective staff explained the processes and work methods of each place.

The visit covered other areas of the lower house as well. Emphasis was placed on the various methods by which the library increases its collection of books, journals, CDs and other materials, especially the provisions of the copyright law. The visiting group also learned about the Legislative Museum and the valuable benefits gained by exposing the parliamentary history to the public. The group was received at the Unit for Public Finance Studies which is comprised of a team of technical staff that deal with issues of budgets estimates and public spending data.

Some additional results achieved through this trip, beyond its stated objectives, were benefits in the areas of internal regulations of the lower house, the Mexican legislative modernization program, legislative processes, and comparative analysis in budgetary matters. The delegation from Nicaragua also received 125 books and journals and explored the possibility of student exchanges or internships between the Mexican and Nicaraguan institutions.

Another activity undertaken this quarter was the survey given to NNA officials, staff and Deputies in order to identify the needs of the library users. The results of this survey are given in the IT consultant's report. The main recommendations stemming from the user survey are to include an automated search system, improve the physical appearance of the library or relocate it, and increase the library's collection, among other actions.

After a comparative analysis of diverse options, we have also identified the software and equipment for the modernization of the library. The software will be SIABUC, a specialized library software developed by the *Universidad de Colima* in Mexico. On August 8, our COP sent the paperwork to the University of Colima to purchase this product. Also, with regard to hardware, based on an ample platform of equipment in other libraries in Nicaragua, the criteria for the acquisition of computer equipment (file server and networked computers) was determined.

It is worth outlining some characteristics of SIABUC and the reason for its selection. This software is used by some of the biggest libraries in Nicaragua such as the *Banco Central de Nicaragua* and the *Universidad Centroamericana*, a fact that facilitates consultations when necessary. The SIABUC purchase includes clauses that make it possible to receive technical or expert assistance necessary to use the system, such as user training available through the University of Colima. Compared to the alternatives

researched (i.e. MICRO WIN/ISIS), SIABUC has a higher quality of internet-based instructions and FAQs and simpler parameters for programming. Another clear advantage is the ability to work with bar codes in managing the collection, and the software includes a variety of modules: acquisitions, analysis, searches, loans, statistics, special processes, periodicals, a users manual and information on conversions. Lastly, SIABUC has a minimal cost and a representative from the *Universidad de Colima* will visit Managua to provide training to NNA library staff.

The computer equipment SUNY/Nicaragua plans to purchase in support of library modernization (estimated at US\$24,000) is as follows:

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Server	01
Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS)	01
Desktop Computers/Multimedia	02
Voltage regulators	02
Laser Printer 10 ppm	01
High Speed Matrix printer	01
Static Bar Code Reader	01
Mobile Bar Code Reader	01
Data Reader/Collector	01
Software	-
Windows NT Server for 5 clients	01
Lotus Notes Server for 5 clients	01

SUNY/Nicaragua is also developing a training plan for the Assembly library's staff which will give them the basic computing tools to run an automated information system in the library. The training will, of course, cover the new equipment which is acquired in the coming quarter, and we expect to cover areas such as Windows, Internet, Email, Microsoft Office in the first course. The second course will deal with SAIBUC itself in the modules listed above. Ideally, all of the above training can be accomplished in three weeks. The approximate total cost for these training courses is US\$1,500, and includes supplies as well as airfare, per diem and course fees for an instructor from Mexico, as noted above.

**3.5 Digital Archive for the NNA.** Work meetings were held with the NNA officials in charge of the archive, and to date approximately 66,000 documents have been identified for digitalization. SUNY/Nicaragua has contacted several vendors in this service area in order to advance along this front.

### **Other Activities**

In May, 2000 our COP Guillermo García and IT consultant Rodolfo Calderón traveled to Quito, Ecuador upon the invitation of the Congress of Ecuador to participate in a seminar on how information technology can support the modernization process. Mr. García and Mr. Calderón made presentations on the advances made in the case of modernization of the Nicaraguan National Assembly.

As complementary activities of this project, SUNY/Nicaragua attended a series of events such as a meeting with the NNA's Defense and Governance Committee on the occasion of the visit of Dr. Antonio Itriago of the International Center for Non-Profit Organizations, who was invited by the NGO *NDC* to analyze reforms within civil society organizations.

SUNY/Nicaragua also participated in the III National Conference of Civil Society Organizations organized by *NDC*, in which the strategies and tendencies in such organizations were analyzed.

We also participated in the preparation of a comparative analysis of the Citizen Participation Laws of Peru and Nicaragua. This was done as technical assistance to the debate on a related legislative bill to be presented to the NNA for consideration. SUNY/Nicaragua also met with Dr. Mario Rosales an international expert in this area, who visited Nicaragua during this activity through an invitation by several NGOs.

Members of SUNY/Nicaragua also attended a lecture given by Dr. Mitchell Selligson of the University of Pittsburgh, dealing with the political culture in Nicaragua and public perceptions of democracy.

### **Anticipated Actions for the Next Program Quarter (August – October, 2000)**

#### **Goal 1.**

- Obtain concrete responses from local universities in terms of candidates for LIP mentor and interns by September/October
- Identify and arrange for experts in legislative research to work with the LIP unit for the purpose of finalizing the details of its design, procedures and methods in written form by September/October
- NNA Deputies and committees are fully informed of the LIP's functions and begin to request studies by October/November
- A draft version of the database of local and international consultants is produced for discussion and development by September/October
- Contact potential experts through a systematic means by October
- Determine dates for visiting consultants in bill-drafting, legislative research and budget analysis by October
- Analyze and detail findings with regard to individuals who can serve as "resident experts" in bill-drafting and budget analysis for the NNA by October/November
- Present a draft version of the CSO directory with information adapted to Deputies' needs by October
- Contact CSOs for creation of the directory through a systematic means
- Devise an alternative to the study tour originally planned for Guatemala, to serve the same purpose, by October

#### **Goal 2.**

- Incorporate existing NNA staff members (caseworkers) and begin training in OPC procedures and resources by September
- Develop a prototype of the information system to manage and document OPC activities by October
- Coordinate efforts with CSOs during entire quarter
- Training workshops for NNA Deputies to improve relations with the public by October/November
- Continue designing section of the NNA web site entitled, “Assembly On-Line” of “Virtual Assembly of Nicaragua” during entire quarter
- Training for NNA Information and Press Division staff in the use of internet publications by October/November
- Advance in the design of informational publications for the media, schools and community outreach by September/October
- Training seminars for NNA Deputies to know how to deal with the media by October/November
- Training for members of the press and media in techniques for objective coverage of the NNA by October/November
- Training for NNA Information and Press Division staff in the resources offered through the Assembly internal computer network by September/October

### **Goal 3.**

- Complete computer network extension by August/September
- Install public workstations during September/October
- Identify a donor for the laptops computers to support the NNA Deputies’ Virtual Office by October
- NNA Training Center/Conference Room: This has been scheduled for the week of 9/18
- Arrival and installation of computer equipment for library modernization by September/October
- Acquisition and installation of SIABUC library automation software by October
- Training for library staff in new software and equipment by September/October
- Begin data entry of using library’s new computer system by October/November