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Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian
Assistance
Office of Food for Peace**

Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Results Report Guidance

Fabretto Children’s Foundation/ Nicaragua

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Below please find the following:

1. Introduction: Annual Food Aid Program Results;
2. Success Stories;
3. Lessons Learned; and
4. Attachments:
 - D. Tracking Table for Beneficiaries and Resources;
 - H. Supplemental Materials; and
 - I. Completeness Checklist.

1. Introduction: Annual Food Aid Program Results

A. What are the overall award objectives of the food aid program and who are the main beneficiary groups?

The overall award objective of Fabretto's USAID/Breedlove Food Program is to provide basic and vital nutrition services to extremely impoverished beneficiaries in Nicaragua. The program is geared primarily to children, pregnant mothers and the elderly who due to their poverty are at high risk of suffering from the malnutrition that is widespread among the country's poor citizens. Our goal is to help beneficiaries maintain basic nutrition levels so that they are healthier. In the particular case of students, improved health is expected to lead to improved school performance as they can concentrate on their school work rather than on empty bellies and their minds and bodies are able to grow as they should.

B. What are the major award activities (general free food distribution, supplementary feeding, therapeutic feeding, food for work, food for agriculture, complementary feeding, etc.)?

Meals using the Breedlove Soup Mix are served through a variety of feeding venues including: pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, community centers, feeding centers, and homes for the elderly. The Soup Mix may be used as both the primary source of nutrition or in a complimentary format with other available food items including local staples such as beans, rice, locally grown fruit and vegetables, and chicken when available. The regimen provided is dependent on the secondary resources the individual feeding venues are able to acquire in addition to the Soup Mix. In all cases however, the Soup Mix is incorporated as an integral menu item that helps to ensure proper delivery of vitamins and nutrients to provide a balanced meal to the over than 40,000 recipients.

C. Did the program incorporate strategies and activities to accelerate the establishment and/or reestablishment of beneficiaries' livelihoods and self-sufficiency, such as resettlement or rehabilitation? If so, what were the strategies and activities? If no, please explain why these kinds of activities are not necessary or appropriate.

YES, Fabretto's Health and Nutrition program maintains its long-term goal of improving the overall health standards of the program beneficiaries, especially the children. The intent is that improved basic health measures will permit children to perform better in school, hence eventually giving them the opportunity from employment and self-sufficiency not possible without education. For mothers and other adults in the program, their improved health will allow them to take better care of their own children, seek viable employment, and create less of a burden on poor communities and families for taking care of elderly and other dependent adults.

Another strategy to improve the livelihoods of the our beneficiaries was the incorporation of the United Nations' framework for Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH), on our school lunch program. FRESH is based in four pillars are: 1) School-based health and nutrition services such as student meals and deworming campaigns; 2) Safe and sanitary school environments, with potable water; 3) Health, hygiene and nutrition education; and 4) Effective school health and nutrition policies. In Fabretto, these pillars translate into a school feeding program for 6,500 students that provides 50%

of their daily caloric requirements. We do all these activities in close coordination with Nicaragua’s Ministry of Health (MINSa) and Education (MINED) and other relevant stakeholders.

In addition, we promote school and home gardens and improved agricultural techniques, improving food self-sufficiency among the communities we served. Through our School Garden Program, we use the gardens to showcase the importance of a balanced diet and to teach students about vegetable and fruit production. According to FAO and its funding partner for this project, The Growing Connection, Fabretto has been one of the best implementing organizations on the school garden initiative in Nicaragua. Every Fabretto center, and many of our partner public schools, has school gardens where children learn to grow vegetables and to incorporate these into their diets.

D. What results were achieved during the fiscal year?

YES. Since Fabretto is now in its 7th round of participation in the IFRP program and the program has remained substantially unchanged, though over time improvements have been integrated, we are able to project very accurately the outcomes of the USAID/Breedlove program. Our delivery model, which is implemented in conjunction with our partner ANF, is a very efficient mechanism to distribute the product to a wide variety of small non-profit entities across the country who would otherwise not have access to USAID/IFRP support and programs due to their size. As detailed in our agreement, we primarily monitor numbers of beneficiaries and numbers of meals served.

E. On the whole, did the award achieve agreed upon objectives and targets (e.g., beneficiary levels, etc.)? If so, what objectives and/or targets were achieved or exceeded, and how? Explain the significance of what was accomplished and identify reasons for greater than expected results or factors that led to higher than expected achievement. If available, provide data in support of results. If not, what objectives and/or targets were not achieved and why? Identify reasons for performance shortfalls or factors that led to lower than expected targets and discuss how these problems were or will be addressed (or how these should be addressed by FFP). Examples might include civil unrest, personnel issues, shipping or ground transportation delays, budgetary constraints, etc. How will these experiences be incorporated into future implementation to improve performance?

YES. Our goal of addressing the general health and nutrition needs of children, women and the elderly in many different Nicaraguan communities was met. Our projections for FY09 called for a total number of 41,746 beneficiaries. The actual number of beneficiaries reached was 42,553, about 800 more than we have projected. We served 3,711,648 meals and provided training to more than a thousand parents on the use Breedlove products.

We were able to reach our projected number beneficiaries despite a combination of challenges. First, customs clearing has become more difficult in the past few years in Nicaragua. Redtape and additional customs fees have resulted in larger than expected expenses committed for the clearing of Breedlove products. For the next grant cycle, we will hire another firm that can ease the process of clearing our containers out of customs.

In this regard, it would be very beneficial for PVOs such as FCF to receive training on customs clearing and to have a list of USAID-approved customs clearing contractors.

Another challenge in FY2009 was an unprecedented increase in the international prices of food staples and fuel. Basic items like corn, sugar, and beans experience a price hike that affected many Nicaraguans, especially those living in food insecure households with little resources to absorb the shocks food prices. Although prices have come down since, in average they remained higher than the period the initial price increased in early 2008. To ensure that our beneficiaries are better equipped to deal with future prices fluctuations in the basic food basket, FCF supports income-generating activities as well as food production projects, prioritizing areas with higher incidence of chronic malnutrition.

Overall, other than the macro issues discussed above, we have had very few problems with implementation of the project in FY09. Thanks to our ability to consolidate resources for transportation, due to both entities' strong presences and sector ties in Nicaragua, and the investments we have made in secure warehousing facilities, the product was never in jeopardy nor did we experience significantly unusual product delivery issues. The key to future planning is to be flexible, exhibit a willingness to work with a variety of entities who have different degrees of expertise to address any problems that arise, and demonstrate the ability to modify activities in order to address unexpected cost increases while still meeting the core program objectives.

2. Success Stories

Barriga llena Corazon Contento. Fabretto's School Lunch Program: A Comprehensive Approach to tackle Malnutrition

Fabretto is an international organization running development programs under an after-school platform. We operate in northern Nicaragua where we have been working with rural communities for many years. In a nutshell, students from public schools go to our centers to participate in a wide range of academic and extracurricular activities, with special emphasis on health and nutrition.

Decades of experience have taught us that one of the most effective mechanisms to tackle malnutrition is a well-designed school lunch program. At the Fabretto schools, we provide a nutritionally rich school lunch to more than 6,500 kids everyday. This is in part thanks to a yearly donation from USAID's Food for Peace program.

What makes our program unique, much more than a food distribution, is how it incorporates a wide range of activities that address the underlying causes of malnutrition.

First of all, the community has a strong sense of ownership over the program. The mothers of the children receiving lunches volunteer at the kitchens preparing the meals and helping us with the logistics. Very often, these mothers integrate the new recipes to their diets at home.

In addition, school gardens enrich our meals with locally produce vegetables and fruits. Since micronutrient deficiencies in our students are a big problem, these gardens provide not only the leafy green needed for vitamins and minerals, but also serve as training ground to teach children

about the importance of a balanced diet and the basics of vegetable production, so students can start gardens of their own.

Also important is the attention given to hygiene and nutrition education. Each lunch hall has an older student in charge of ensuring kids wash their hands with water and soap. This simple practice reduces the chances of getting an infection, a big contributor to malnutrition. Once the kids finish their meal, they also have to brush their teeth, so they are ready to go to the other school activities. As for nutrition, the value of the meals reflects the specific needs of the community. As we track the different malnutrition indicators, we adjust the diet accordingly. Just this year, the percentage of malnourished student was reduced by 7%.

Although there is much that remains to be done, a comprehensive school lunch program has proven to be one of the most effective mechanisms we have to achieve our goal of providing tools so rural communities can break their cycle of poverty.



Figure 1 Carla Antonieta Maradiaga and Jayrin Muñoz Videa, both primary students from Somoto, Nicaragua, enjoy a delicious school meal before they go to classes. © Rafael Merchan

3. Lessons Learned

Over the course of the last seven years, the Fabretto Children's Foundation has learned a number of important lessons which we are happy to share with the IFRP community:

1. Meals using the Breedlove Soup Mix are easy to prepare with proper training and in general they are very well received by the beneficiaries. However, for the program to be successful as part of a long term diet plan which is geared to creating permanent long term improvements in the health of the children and adults served, the Breedlove Product is most useful when incorporated into a diet that includes other food sources and types. In other words, in order to avoid food boredom by the recipients, we use the Product no more than 3 times a week, and generally twice. As much as possible, we try to provide a varied diet so as to engage the recipients, and especially the children who are often the pickiest eaters, in the diet plan.

2. Implementation partners must have a demonstrated desire and ability to report on finances, numbers of recipients, and meals served. In selecting such partners, we recommend that any Cooperating Sponsor get evidence of this upfront in very concrete terms. Many entities will have a strong desire to partner with Cooperating Sponsors in the IFRP food distribution plan because it is so well regarded and the product so beneficial to the recipients – however, if they do not have the ability to fully participate in the reporting process in a timely fashion, then the success of any activities will be significantly undermined.

3. We have two primary distribution mechanisms, one for Fabretto and one for ANF. Fabretto's program is more traditional in that we distribute the food product directly to the final beneficiaries through our 5 education centers and 34 rural community schools. In this case, health and nutrition are directly tied to school performance.