

El Salvador — BASICS II Country Program

Still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Mitch that struck in October 1998, El Salvador was jolted by two major earthquakes in early 2001, exacerbating a difficult development environment. Roughly one-fourth of the population has been affected by the earthquakes; the Salvadoran social infrastructure, including homes, schools, and health facilities, was especially hard hit.

Child Survival Program Overview

BASICS I began activities in El Salvador in 1998. In February 1999, USAID and the Ministry of Health (MOH) initiated a three-year bilateral project to achieve sustainable improvement in the health of women and children, with special attention to poor women of childbearing age and children under five years of age in rural areas. BASICS II provides technical assistance to the MOH in planning and implementing the child health component of this bilateral project, known as SALSALSA (*Salvadoreños Saludables*). SALSALSA is scheduled to end in September 2004, just after the completion of the BASICS II project in June.

Technical Approach

BASICS II seeks to assist the MOH in achieving significant impact on child health through the implementation of an essential child health package. This package includes growth promotion through monitoring of adequate weight gain and counseling, standardized management of childhood illness, and promotion of exclusive breastfeeding. The community approach taken in El Salvador combines an adaptation of the

Honduran growth monitoring and promotion model, *Atención Integral a la Niñez* (AIN), and the community component of integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI). BASICS II supports strong community-level intervention by training volunteer nutrition counselors and health promoters, while reinforcing the network that supports them.

Recognizing the importance of the perinatal/neonatal period on child health, BASICS II contributes to national policy development and early implementation of the World Health Organization's Mother-Baby Package (MBP) in local hospitals and at the primary care level. BASICS II also is an active member of the National Peri/neonatal Task Force. Since 58% of deliveries take place at the institutional level, the Project (in collaboration with the MOH, UNICEF, and the national non-governmental organization CALMA) is helping to implement the facility-based system for monitoring the promotion of breastfeeding, known as MADLAC.

Finally, BASICS II assists with the national implementation of a communication initiative (called COSIN) to promote key child health practices. Since a large proportion of child mortality occurs at home with no health



facility contact, the initiative integrates many of the elements of essential child health. The promotion of child growth through monitoring adequate weight gain and counseling, appropriate home management of illness, identification of danger signs, and appropriate and timely care-seeking to qualified health providers are all messages conveyed by this initiative. An integrated package of job aids and materials was developed that will be used in the nationwide dissemination and scale-up of Project interventions.

Interventions

IMCI at the Community Level

Community-based growth promotion. A combined growth promotion and IMCI at the community level model was introduced by the Project to expand improved care-seeking and treatment for childhood illnesses, including the prevention and treatment of diarrhea and acute respiratory infections (ARI). BASICS II collaborated with the MOH in developing a plan to revamp the country's network of volunteer nutrition counselors to work in coordination with health promoters nationwide. In addition to management of illness and appropriate care-seeking, community volunteers and promoters are used to counsel on improved child feeding using

existing community structures and monthly growth promotion activities. All 367 promoters in the three priority departments were trained, and the Project (with the MOH) recently extended the training to 1,291 promoters in the remaining departments.

Nutrition

Exclusive breastfeeding. MADLAC—a self-monitoring tool for the promotion of breastfeeding—has proven successful at increasing early breastfeeding. The tool uses monthly monitoring data from exit interviews at maternities to self-correct for breastfeeding services in postpartum women. Based on early success, BASICS II was instrumental in the expansion of this tool to 29 large maternities in the country.

Perinatal/Neonatal Health

Newborn health. Newborn health was incorporated in the curriculum of the health promoters program, along with IMCI at the community level. The MOH mandated that health promoters should visit mothers within the first 24 hours after delivery. At the facility level, BASICS II assisted the MOH in implementing the Mother/Baby Package. Essential maternal and newborn care, including monitoring of breastfeeding by MADLAC, are components of this package.

Country Contact

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BASICS II Intervention Area



Health Status Overview

Total population of El Salvador	6.2 million ^a
Under 5 mortality (CMR)	30/1000 live births ^a
Infant mortality (<1 year) (IMR)	35/1000 ^b
Neonatal mortality (<1 month)	17/1000 ^b
Low height for age < 5 years (<2 SD)	23.3% ^a
DPT3 coverage (among children 12–23 months)	99% ^c

a. PHNIP Country Health Statistical Report: El Salvador, March 2002 Reference Document.

b. Encuesta Nacional de Salud Familiar: Informe Final, República de El Salvador, (FESAL), 1998; Salvadoran Demographic Association and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, 2000.

c. WHO Vaccine Preventable Disease: Monitoring System, 2001 Global Summary, WHO/Geneva, 2001

Key Partners

Ministry of Health:

- key implementation partner at local and national levels

Salvadorian Institute for Social Security:

- facility-based IMCI and MADLAC

World Bank and IDB:

- adaptation for El Salvador of the Honduran AIN model
- package of preventive and curative services to be delivered through contracts with local NGOs

PAHO:

- key partner at the central level in IMCI technical assistance and implementation

PLAN International, Catholic Relief Services and FESAL:

- IMCI at the community level; technical and operational assistance

UNICEF and CALMA:

- design and implementation of MADLAC and AIN



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