

Nicaragua — BASICS II Country Program

A combination of poverty, illiteracy, dictatorship, and natural disasters resulted in high rates in infant and child mortality in Nicaragua throughout the 1970s. The country's protracted civil conflict in the 1980s, its inability to consolidate a democratic government during the 1990s, and its continuing economic deterioration had created a precarious situation for child health when Hurricane Mitch struck the region in late October 1998. The World Bank's estimates placed Nicaragua among the poorest countries in the hemisphere with a per capita GNP of \$430, or adjusted purchasing parity of about US\$2,060 per year.¹ The areas of the country most severely affected by Hurricane Mitch are also among its poorest regions.

Child Survival Program Overview

BASICS II began activities in Nicaragua as part of USAID's disaster relief following the hurricane. Post-Mitch assistance provided by USAID through its collaborating agencies has been designed to address the immediate needs created by the hurricane and to lay the foundation for continuing efforts, especially at the community level, to define health problems, encourage appropriate care-seeking behavior, and make effective use of available resources. The BASICS II program to improve child health and nutrition through community intervention has a scheduled completion date at the end of 2003.

Technical Approach

The BASICS II community-based strategy in Nicaragua draws upon two approaches

that are now being perceived as complementary and compatible. One approach is the integrated management of childhood illness at the community level (C-IMCI). In Nicaragua, C-IMCI builds on community-level activities previously supported by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and international agencies—such as vertical programs to address immunization, acute respiratory infection (ARI), and diarrheal disease—and on activities supported by bilateral projects and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) as part of USAID child survival efforts.

The second approach is a community-based growth promotion (CBGP) program that builds upon cumulative international experience in nutrition and growth and development programs. An evaluation of food supplementation programs in Nicaragua

1. Population, Health, and Nutrition Information Project. 2002. *Country Health Statistical Report: Nicaragua*.



over the past ten years was unable to demonstrate any nutritional impact, which further increased interest in the growth promotion approach.

BASICS II has been working in collaboration with the World Bank and the Manoff Group to develop a Nicaraguan equivalent to the very successful blended child health initiative that the Project developed with the MOH in Honduras—*Atención Integral a la Niñez* or *AIN*. The focus of this initiative is to develop a program of regular community-based weighing of children under two years of age and to monitor their growth and counsel mothers or primary caretakers in improved feeding practices. BASICS II believes that the integrated focus of the *AIN* program has the greatest potential for ultimately improving child morbidity and mortality from ARI and diarrheal disease. At the same time, however, the Project is addressing the need to build on the

existing national structure with an integrated approach to curative care that links the community with the health system.

BASICS II works with numerous PVOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to implement the program in two departments hardest hit by Hurricane Mitch, Jinotega and Matagalpa.

Interventions

IMCI

Through partnerships with PVOs and NGOs, the MOH, and the World Bank, BASICS II has provided key technical input to expand the combined *AIN/AIEPI (Atención Integrada de las Enfermedades Prevalentes en la Infancia)* model for improved child health. In addition to its direct work in two departments, the Project serves as a technical resource for NGO networks and other partners that are implementing this approach in two additional departments, bringing the total to six departments.

Through technical assistance to PROSALUD, NICASALUD, and the MOH and through engagement and coordination with other partners, the *AIN-AIEPI* approach for integrated management of childhood illness at the community level has become part of the national maternal and child health and nutrition strategy. NICASALUD is the channel for support to 8 major international PVOs and 13 Nicaraguan NGOs. The Project's approach has also been incorporated into the World Bank's national poverty reduction strategy.

Breastfeeding and

Child Nutrition in Nicaragua	1998	2001
children 0-3 months exclusively breastfed	29.5%	39.3%
children 0-5 months exclusively breastfed	18.8%	31.1%
children <5 years with chronic malnutrition	24.9%	20.2%



Health Status Overview

Total population of Nicaragua	4.9 million ^a
Under 5 mortality (CMR)	41.1/1000 live births ^a
Infant mortality (<1 year) (IMR)	33/1000 ^a
Neonatal mortality (<1 month)	17.1/1000 ^b
Low height for age <3 years (<2 SD)	17.3% ^b
DPT3 coverage (among children 12–23 months)	93% ^c

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

b. Encuesta Nicaraguense de Demografía y Salud, 1998–2001.

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

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Key Partners

Ministry of Health: *principal counterpart for BASICS II and its partners*

- Ultimately responsible for program oversight and sustainability

PROSALUD: *bilateral partner*

- Implements the child survival program in three departments

World Bank

- Implements AIN model in four departments

UNICEF

- Incorporates the AIN model for PROSILAIS, which is the government's principal project for supporting the country's six comprehensive local health systems (SILAIS)

NGO networks:

- **CARE:** *Implementing partner with the Supervivencia Infantil Project and the SALUMAI (Salud Materno Infantil) Project*
- **HOPE:** *Materials development, implementing partner*
- **Project Concern International and Wisconsin Volunteers:** *Implementing partners in one department*
- **NICASALUD (USAID/PVO umbrella group):** *Eight US-based organizations, implementing partners in five departments*
- **Project Concern Internacional (PCI)**
- **Save The Children:** *Implementing partner working in one department (Chinandega)*
- **Catholic Relief Services (CRS):** *Partner working in four departments (Matagalpa, Estelí, Jinotega, and Wiwilí)*
- **ADRA:** *Partner working in two departments (Madriz and Nueva Segovia)*
- **Ayuda en Acción:** *Funding partner working in one department (Boaco)*
- **Acción Medica Cristiana:** *Partner working in one department (Matagalpa)*
- **MOST**
- **FUNESDECI**



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