



# ACORDAR

## EX POST PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

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### DISCLAIMER

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## ACRONYMS

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| ACORDAR      | Alliance to Create Opportunities for Rural Development through Agro-Enterprise Relationships |
| ADDAC        | Asociación para la Diversificación y Desarrollo de la Agricultura Comunitaria                |
| ASDENIC      | Asociación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Social  |
| AG           | Asociación Aldea Global Jinotega   |
| CATIE        | Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza                                      |
| CECOSEMAM    | Central de Cooperativas de Servicios Múltiples Aroma de Café                                 |
| CECOOPSEMEIN | Cooperativas de Servicios Múltiples de Exportación e Importaciones del Norte                 |
| CIAT         | Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical   |
| COPRAHOR     | Cooperativa Agropecuaria de Producción de Hortalizas   |
| CRS          | Catholic Relief Services   |
| EQ           | Evaluation Question  |
| FEM          | Fundación Entre Mujeres  |
| GAP          | Good Agricultural Practice   |
| GDA          | Global Development Alliance  |
| INTA         | Instituto Nicaragüense de Tecnología Agropecuaria  |
| IPADE        | El Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Democracia   |
| LAFISE       | Servicios Financieros Latinoamericanos   |
| LWR          | Lutheran World Relief  |
| MAGFOR       | Ministerio Agropecuario y Forestal   |
| NGO          | Non Governmental Organization  |
| PFID         | Partnerships for Food Industry Development   |
| SOPPEXCCA    | Sociedad de Pequeños Productores para la Exportación de Café                                 |
| SOW          | Statement of Work  |
| TOC          | Theory of Change   |
| USAID        | United States Agency for International Development   |



## **Executive summary**

The Alliance to Create Opportunities for Rural Development through Agro-Enterprise Relationships (ACORDAR) was initially designed in early 2007 for a period of 30 months and it was extended up to 5 years, closing operations in October 2012. The implementation was awarded to Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The total final amount allocated by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was US\$18,787,212; with counterpart funds (international NGOs) of US\$2,925,713 and leveraged funds of US\$31,282,955, for a total of US\$52,995,880 over the life of the project.

The objective of the program was to contribute, in the first phase, to an increase in net income of 75% of the participating families by 20% over the baseline figure. The program endeavored to ensure permanent employment, and strengthen the commercial capacity of 5,400 poor rural families in 44 Municipalities in the first phase, which expanded up to 7,000 in 50 municipalities, in the second phase, in alliance with the municipal governments and the private sector. The program also hoped to train 6,328 farmers on different topics related to value chains, and produce 9,094 hectares of crops with improved management practice technologies.

The ACORDAR Program was strategically guided by a consortium conformed by CRS, implementation leader, LWR and TechnoServe (TNS); AG was a core consortium member during the first phase. CRS and LWR worked with sub-partners while TNS implemented activities directly. CRS worked with the following local partners: Caritas Estelí, the Northern Multi-service Export and Import Cooperative Organization (CECOOPSEMEIN), the Association for Community Agricultural Diversification and Development (ADDAC), the Aroma of Coffee Multi-service Cooperative Organization (CECOSEMAM), the Association for Social Development of Nicaragua (ASDENIC), the Foundation among Women (La FEM), and AG. LWR worked with the Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives (CECOCAFEN), the Society of Small Farmers for Coffee Export (SOPPEXCCA), the Association of Small-scale Nicaraguan Coffee Farmers' Cooperatives (CAFENICA), and the Institute for the Development of Democracy (IPADE).

In order to respond the Statement of Work (SOW)'s Evaluation Questions (EQs), the ACORDAR performance evaluation was based on a realist perspective. A mixed approach was adopted in terms of employing quantitative (i.e. survey) and qualitative (e.g. front-end analysis and workshops, review of program and other relevant documents, key informant interviews, focus groups and cases assessments) methods. The final ACORDAR reports, including those of the consortium members, were also taken into consideration. The strategies of the ACORDAR's theory of change (TOC) were spelled out as a fundamental step for the evaluation as well as the identification of lessons learned. The quantitative component of the methodology was modified in terms of the definition of the sampling universe as many of the ACORDAR baseline database's recorded beneficiaries were not able to be located. However, an international statistical standard was guaranteed as the universe was expanded and, although a strict before-after design turned out not to be feasible, some comparisons were nevertheless able to be made and relevant findings were properly identified.



The Evaluation Team **concludes** that:

1. The ACORDAR TOC's complementary inclusive value chain development strategies were based on the accumulated knowledge and experience of relevant interventions and practitioners (CIAT, CATIE and CRS), though two strategic components were not taken into consideration until the second implementation phase. Core consortium members and their partners demonstrated having learning and knowledge management capacity for improving program implementation.
2. The originally expected 2.5-years implementation period accounts for the selection of non-income-poor producers who also already had value chain experience; this was needed for achieving concrete results in the short term as a longer period is required for better articulating (poorer) producers into value chains. Likewise, value chains were selected considering either the consortium's previous working experience with relevant producers or by their economic potential (taro, cocoa); they were appropriately selected considering their employment and income generation potential in the short-medium term.
3. The variety of intervention types (infrastructural investments, technical assistance, etc.) was well suited to the different beneficiaries. The alliances between producer organizations, and financial and non-financial service providers and input suppliers, contributed to program results.
4. Value chain productivity increases were observed and many technologies and good technological practices were diffused and might have been definitely adopted by producers, though the latter needs to be properly evaluated. The investments made are likely to be sustainable provided beneficiaries' relevant skills are further developed and other value chain actors jointly implement value chain development strategies.
5. The previously held gender awareness of cooperative organizations and partners helps explain the successful implementation of the program gender mainstreaming strategy during the second phase. However, despite the economic and institutional empowerment of some women beneficiaries, assets accessibility gender inequity and other gender inequalities persist.

The evaluation team has identified the following as the main **lessons learned**:

1. A program staff and advisers' willingness and capacity to learn and tap useful knowledge contribute to the effectiveness of results and the enrichment of the program's TOC.
2. The program's time scope is an important factor for the targeting process.
3. Producers and organizations' previous experience facilitates having positive results very early in program implementation and motivates actors, especially beneficiary producers and their associations, to increasingly engage in project activities. However, attempting to make relatively underdeveloped value chains which supply basic agricultural food products to local household consumption, to try to export too



early is risky; greater support is needed to overcome unexpected external negative factors which are inherent to international commodity markets.

4. Capacities developed by cooperative enterprises and a truly win-win mentality among actors are needed for maintaining the alliances between value chain actors, which in turn are fundamental for the sustainability of results.
5. A cross-cutting gender strategy of working simultaneously with both men and women producer beneficiaries based on local partners' gender-equity awareness and capacity is effective in terms of identifying relevant, precise and potentially effective chain-links-tailored-made incentives to address the specific gender equity issues.

The **recommendations** for future USAID's Economic Growth Office activities in the area of agricultural development are as follows:

1. Value chain development programs should be planned for at least 5 years, with resources guaranteed by all associates and partners and should work with all relevant stakeholders promoting governance. The number of beneficiaries should depend on the number of producers operating in the chosen value chain, given due consideration to geographical distribution issues.
2. Cooperatives should be supported to establish solid and lasting agreements and contracts with exporting firms, so as to develop long-term production strategies and, whenever possible, they should be linked directly to those firms very early in program implementation. However, relatively underdeveloped agricultural chains catering to local markets should firstly graduate themselves in these markets before attempting to engage with the international commodity markets.
3. It is effective to have a variety of intervention types, but the particular characteristics of individual beneficiaries, including their local relationships, should be taken into consideration. Likewise, beneficiary producers' preferences regarding the goods and services offered to them need to be respected.
4. Cooperative enterprises' basic capacities should firstly be built before their formal engagement with other value chain actors, while forging alliances and developing value chain governance.
5. Mechanisms, methods and incentives should be established so as promote the win-win mentality among the stronger value chain actors' managers and technicians.
6. An appropriate evaluation of ACORDAR's possible cultural transformations among beneficiary producers should be made in two years time.

## ACORDAR Program Summary

The Alliance to Create Opportunities for Rural Development through Agro-Enterprise Relationships (ACORDAR) was initially designed in early 2007 for a period of 30 months and it was extended up to 5 years, closing operations in October 2012. The implementation was awarded to CRS under Cooperative Agreement No. 524-A-00-07-00015-00 on September 17, 2007. Project implementation began in early October, 2007. The original amount of the award was for US\$ 7,589,398, through the Global Development Alliance (GDA), with an additional Water Initiative being added in October 2008<sup>1</sup> in the amount of US\$1,440,993 bringing the total value of USAID funding to US\$ 9,530,391 for the first phase. The total final amount allocated by USAID was US\$18,787,212; with counterpart funds (international NGOs) of US\$2,925,713 and leveraged funds of US\$31,282,955, for a total of US\$52,995,880 over the life of the project.

The objective of the program was to contribute, in the first phase, to an increase in net income of 75% of the participating families by 20% over the baseline figure. The program endeavored to ensure permanent employment, and strengthen the commercial capacity of 5,400 poor rural families in 44 Municipalities in the first phase, which expanded up to 7,000 in 50 municipalities, in the second phase, in alliance with the municipal governments and the private sector. The program also hoped to train 6,328 farmers on different topics related to value chains, and produce 9,094 hectares of crops with improved management practice technologies.



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<sup>1</sup> Implementation of the Water Initiative started until April 2009.





## **1 Introduction**

This document presents the results of the performance evaluation of the ACORDA R program carried out by a team led by Rene M. Escoto and conformed by Eduardo Centeno, Fernando Hernandez, Karla Angulo and Maritza Ruiz, and another team of field surveyors: Gladys Salazar, Maria Teresa Flores, Juan Manuel Castillo, Ruth Mayorga, Sephora Jaen, Rosalpina Hernandez, Francisco Centeno and Edward Centeno.

The evaluation work started in the second week of August and ended by mid December, 2012, with the presentation of the final evaluation report. This final report follows the presentation of the draft report, the briefing with USAID and the reception of written comments by USAID officers.

The evaluation team is grateful with Ira Frydman and Marcela Villagra (USAID) for their support and comments provided on the first draft, and especially with the many individual producers and cooperative enterprises' leaders and representatives, municipal mayors and functionaries, consortium members (specially the CRS staff), partner organizations leaders, national and international experts, service and input providers and buyers, who generously gave their valuable time to work with the evaluators in the workshop, focus group, interview and survey activities.

In the following section the development problem addressed by ACODAR is briefly delineated, so as to understand the relevance of the USAID response as a development agency cooperating with Nicaragua's sustainable and equitable economic growth. Next is stated the purpose of the evaluation which is then followed by a description and justification of the evaluation design and methodology. The findings are then presented, then the conclusions and finally the lessons learned and recommendations.

## **2 Development Problem and USAID's Response**

The overall central development problem to be addressed, according to ACORDAR program documents, is that agricultural-based livelihoods are not profitable and extreme poverty and malnutrition plague small and medium producers. However, more specifically, the program was meant to address the following underlying problems:

- i) Producers suffer from low competitiveness due to: (i) commodity chain interruptions and fragmentation; (ii) low yields; (iii) low product quality; and (iv) volume size shortcomings, especially with regard to CAFTA-DR and even national buyers' requirements. This is due in turn to: limited access to improved seed, irrigation technology, technical assistance, financial services, productive and processing infrastructure, water supply and knowledge; obstacles faced to own and access knowledge on vegetable- and tuber-processing, packaging and value-adding infrastructure, and to obtaining market pricing and market intelligence information on new markets, value added mechanisms, agro industry legal requirements, packaging materials and rural enterprise service providers.
- ii) Local Governments, individual producers and rural enterprises along the value chains do not work together in local development.

- iii) NGO, private and public sector entities provide market analysis to farmers isolated from each other.
- iv) Most cooperative enterprises are in their early stages of organizational development, lack basic financial management skills, solid governance structures, strategic and business planning skills, infrastructure acquisition and market intelligence systems required to compete in increasingly demanding markets and to adjust to shifting demands
- v) Women have low access to farm-generated income, as they are not involved in negotiations on prices and other terms of sales.

Program documentation, however, also makes reference to other two issues which are no further addressed: High deforestation levels affecting the environment and agricultural production and little regulation of private corporations-small farmer organizations relationships.

### **3 Purpose of the Evaluation**

The SOW has defined ACORDAR evaluation as being a “performance evaluation”, which, according to the USAID Evaluation Policy (January 2011), is meant to *“focus on descriptive and normative questions: what a particular project or program has achieved (either at an intermediate point in execution or at the conclusion of an implementation period); how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; whether expected results are occurring; and other questions that are pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual”*

The SOW also states that *“The final evaluation will assess the impact, effectiveness, and success of the ACORDAR program, its interventions, and its overall approach to agricultural development, growth, and income generation. In general, it will evaluate the extent to which the program has contributed in advancing its stated goal, objectives, and intermediate results. Furthermore, it will assess the effectiveness and success of the program in key areas and objectives, such as: improving agricultural productivity, adoption of more sustainable environmental practices, inclusive value chain development, small business enterprise development, strengthening of producer cooperatives and associations, increased participation by women, and improved marketing of crops by increasing participation of small-holder producers in national, regional, and international markets. The assessment will also seek to answer a central question -- to what extent has the program contributed in increasing income and employment and reducing poverty in target areas and among targeted groups?”*

ACORDAR’s performance evaluation has been timed for its closing period “This evaluation will be used to inform USAID with an analytical foundation for the design of future Economic Growth Office activities in the area of agricultural development with a focus on increasing rural income and employment, and poverty reduction” (SOW).

## **4 Research Design and Evaluation Methodology**

### **4.1 The methodological importance of the Theory of Change of ACORDAR**

A premise of the present methodology for the evaluation of ACORDAR is that any program is based upon a theory which explicitly and/or implicitly states how and why it will work success fully (sees Baker 2000). A TOC is a “specific and measurable description of a social change initiative that forms the basis for strategic planning, on-going decision-making and evaluation.” There are not theory-neutral approaches for developing of value chains.

CRS worked with some stakeholders, especially with CIAT, during the formulation phase to practically put together an (implicit) TOC which helped clarify and improve ACORDAR program design. This TOC should firstly be spelled out and understood to make a proper performance evaluation. This is especially important in programs that seek to influence behavior and generate (business) cultural transformations, such as ACORDAR: a TOC can help disentangle the inputs and activities that go into providing the program interventions, the outputs that are delivered, and the outcomes that stem from expected behavioral changes among beneficiaries (Gertler et al 2011). Moreover, at midterm and closing program implementation, it allows both stakeholders and evaluators to work together to build a “commonly understood vision of the long-term goals, how they will be reached, and what will be used to measure progress along the way” (ActKnowledge and Aspen Institute 2003).

A TOC takes a wider view of a desired change than a traditional logic model, “carefully probing the assumptions in what may be a long and complex process. Articulating a TOC often entails thinking through all the steps along a path toward a desired change, identifying the preconditions that will enable (and possibly inhibit) each step, listing the activities that will produce those conditions, and explaining why those activities are likely to work.” (GrantCraft 2006).

“A theory of change should:

- Depict a sequence of the inputs the project, program, or policy will use; the activities the inputs will support; the outputs toward which the project, program, or policy is budgeting; and the outcomes and impacts expected
- Identify events and conditions that may affect obtaining the outcomes
- Identify the assumptions the program is making about causes and effects
- Identify critical assumptions which based on the policy and environmental context and a review of the literature, the evaluation needs to examine” (Morra Imas and Rist 2009, p. 151).

### **4.2 The Theory of Change of ACORDAR**

The ACORDAR TOC, as is the case with all development programs’ theories of change, is based on a diversity of approaches which come from several sources, all of them adapted to local circumstances in varying degrees and some added along the implementation period. ACORDAR TOC was in fact an attempt by value-chain development practitioners to try to synthesize their experiences and accumulated



knowledge, within the framework of the Learning Alliance community, into a single future intervention proposal to be implemented in Nicaragua. Interviews with CIAT, CATIE, CRS, AG, LWR and TNS expert and functionaries, together with the review made of CRS program and other institutional or conceptual documents of CRS, CIAT and CATIE, allowed for the systematic reconstruction of the ACORDAR TOC, which main components or strategic lines of actions are described in what follows.

1. **Value Chain Methodology:** This approach consists in promoting deliberate, constant, systemic and sustained participation, planning, negotiation and dialogue among key chain actors such as farmers cooperative enterprises, other private sector actors and municipal (local) governments), in order to create strategic business collaboration, agreements, alliances, game rules and trust. This should gear actors' strategies and resources toward agricultural competitiveness and production development in agricultural chains such as coffee, beans, fruits and vegetables, roots and tubers, and cocoa.

As a result of a self-evaluation of ACORDAR implementation at the end of 2008, the organization of permanent value chain coordination committees and the formulation of fair and transparent chain governance rules and standards were added to this strategy (see section on sustainability below).

2. **Organizing individual farmers into cooperative enterprises to organize scale economies and be competitive and responsive to the rigors of emerging markets:** partners will help increase membership, form new small and medium rural enterprises and forge alliances among rural enterprises with common interests regionally and nationally; trade capacity building in terms of increased access to product markets, input and service markets and other relevant information for decision making, business management (specially administrative and organizational capacity) and regional/international markets exposure; using participatory methods for agroenterprise development of these organizations and second-tier cooperative associations; empowering farmers to understand their markets and analyze their opportunities; employing consortium members' range of skills and knowledge as needed during the agroenterprise development process and bringing additional ones as required. The mentioned 2008 self-evaluation added the development of inclusive and efficient business models.
3. **Increase quality, volume of production and yields and diversify crops to reduce risks in volatile markets.** This component implies technology transfer in areas like irrigation, black and red beans and vegetables seeds production, equipment, machinery, mills, plants and greenhouses, farm planning and where appropriate water conservation technologies (drip irrigation, rain-water capturing systems, mini-dams, reservoirs and artificial lagoons). The 2008 self-evaluation exercise incorporated the promotion of good agricultural practices (GAP) and the sharing of innovation among producers.
4. **Improve access and ownership of (bio-fertilization, production, post-harvest and packaging) infrastructure by small and medium farmers:** these investments should contribute to the capitalization of the cooperative enterprises.

5. **Alliance (win-win) with municipal governments for encouraging public investments and local policies and laws** geared towards the development of the chosen value chains: coffee, vegetables and beans, etc.
6. **Catalyze new investment and demonstrate the business ethics of participating private corporations**, by providing intermediation or guaranteeing fair negotiation terms in the business transactions between corporations and small and medium enterprises; expanding and strengthening the previously established (Title-II Development Assistance Program and Michigan State University/PFID) relationships between consortium members and national and international corporations; and promoting and conducting corporate social responsibility standards and activities geared towards social, labour quality occupation, economic and environmental improvement among partners, sub-partners, producers cooperative enterprises and service providers. This strategy, as a concept, was developed during the first year of ACORDAR implementation.
7. **Pursue environmentally friendly production methods**, giving preference to certified fair trade, organic and green markets for relevant value chains (e.g. canopy-shade and/or organic coffee and cocoa crops, etc.).
8. **Gender mainstreaming**: improvement, development and evaluation of gender-equity institutionalization at all levels and stages of organizational life.

All these strategies would lead to the achievement of ACORDAR's goals.

#### **4.3 The Realist Approach to ACORDAR Performance Evaluation: The methodological question.**

The testing of ACORDAR TOC is a necessary performance evaluation exercise, considering the main purposes of the evaluation: lessons learning, sustainability evaluation and impact assessment. The testing should help explain how and why observed effects occurred and should also contribute to the design of a better theories of change for US AID's "future Economic Growth Office activities in the area of agricultural development with a focus on increasing rural income and employment, and poverty reduction" (SOW).

Any program TOC, however, has an *ex ante* theoretical dimension and a real implementation one. And, in both cases, there might be several versions depending on the stakeholders' own perspectives and roles in program implementation. This is partly explained by the fact that although the TOC's strategies might have been clear for most of the ACORDAR consortium's core members, especially for those who wrote the project document, this vision was not necessarily well discussed and shared with the other main stakeholders with implementation responsibilities such as the partners and even the cooperative enterprises. Strategic and tactical implementation decisions also need to be regularly taken to achieve program effectiveness<sup>2</sup>; in this sense the own

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<sup>2</sup> The midterm review also reported earlier that ACORDAR's different technical approaches were "tailor made to the specific needs of their clients based on the variety of crops, the market demands of those crops, their geographic locations and climates, and the relative experiences and varying levels of development and sophistication of the farmers being assisted." (Jackson, 2009, page 8).



views of implementers and participants, including ACORDAR beneficiaries, have naturally influenced actual implementation.

There might expectedly have been certain traits of the original ACORDAR TOC which might have been more or less permanently put into practice. However, neither the theoretical nor the effective ACORDAR TOC has been necessarily consistent along the whole implementation period. A preliminary finding of an initial front-end and well thought out analysis, which included the participatory reconstruction of a timeline with program staff and other stakeholders, showed that ACORDAR interventions were complex and heterogeneous and that the eventual evaluation findings would need to be properly interpreted, as there might have been several ACORDAR TOCs strategies in the making.

In this sense, in-depth interview with CIAT and CATIE experts provided a more precise conceptualization of ACORDAR's TOC, as presented above. However, a stakeholder's<sup>3</sup> workshop (see Annex 1) was also organized by the team evaluator and held in August 23rd in Sébaco (in CECOOPSEMEIN's premises). The exercise clearly showed that although USAID, CRS staff, consortium members, partners associations and other stakeholders (municipal government, input suppliers, and agricultural government agencies) developed a common project culture, they did not share exactly the same view and/or understanding as to the actual TOC being implemented. It became clear that the original *ex ante* hypothetical TOC was not dominantly present in the stakeholders' actual understanding of the effective TOC being implemented.

On the other hand, the particular characteristics and circumstances of each project beneficiary (individual and collective) have specific influences upon their final behavior and use of the goods and services (products) provided by ACORDAR. Beneficiaries attached meanings, in complex manners, to their evolving economic, social, environmental and political contexts as the program was being implemented and their behavior and attitudes with relation to the ACORDAR activities were thereby influenced by those meanings. It is difficult though to ascertain exactly how those meanings have worked through behaviors and attitudes over time.

However, in any case, there is no doubt that generalizations across beneficiary types, value chains, municipalities, etc. cannot easily and validly be done. In this sense, valid patterns needed to be visualized at the outset of the evaluation process. It thus became initially evident, for example, that coffee value chain producers had greater production and marketing experience in a historically well developed value chain, as compared with cocoa producers/value chain producing in distant places; also, women cooperatives with prior gender awareness benefited differently from male-dominated cooperatives; and so on. The results presented below show and assess the main patterns identified.

The economic reasoning and responses of individual target producers and their associations given their particular positioning in their respective value chains also needed to be identified and assessed, as they impinged upon the actual outcomes of the implementation of ACORDAR. For example, gender-oriented women producers (e.g. women members of FEM's associated cooperatives) had a different bundle of interests

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<sup>3</sup> A stakeholders analysis was also made with the purpose of identifying their backgrounds, missions, relative interests and possible attitudes towards the realization of the evaluation of ACORDAR.



and expectations as compared with those of more strongly market-oriented men beans producers (e.g. CECOOPSEMEIN producers).

ACORDAR's process implementation was also meant to have been affected by unexpected events, including natural phenomena (dry spells, heavy rains), change of director, staff learning, program management innovations, etc. The implementation strategy was most probably to have been adapted by design and/or default. Moreover, ACORDAR program most likely had transformed itself and effectively new initiatives (e.g. innovation fund, water investments, etc.), were actually launched. Its referenced first-phase's successes (as mentioned in the mid-term review) and possible unmet challenges might well have changed the original conditions including even the ones that prevailed along the first implementation phase. Programs change external reality and are simultaneously changed by those very changes.

In this context, a "lessons learning" exercise requires asking questions about which of the heterogeneous ACORDAR program activities have worked for different target populations/beneficiaries, under which specific local circumstances in the selected municipalities and in what respects the activities have been effective and with what effectiveness their expected outcomes have been achieved. The methodology was designed to answer the relevant SOW's formal EQs from this perspective.

#### **4.4 Analysis of SOW's Evaluation Questions**

An initial analysis of the content of the SOW's EQs was done to determine how they related to the purposes of the evaluation, identify prior hypotheses and relevant indicators, classify them according to the type of analysis required (normative, descriptive), make sure that the proposed issues could be measured, assess the availability and the need for information to answer them, select the most appropriate method to collect information, identify the data sources, the type of sampling and the method of analysis. The results of this exercise are presented in two EQs Analysis Matrixes (see Annexes 2 and 3) and the main results were:

- i. There was a balance between the types of questions, but some questions had too many entries and their operationalization, understood as a breakdown in specific variables and indicators, presented some degree of difficulty. Simplification was the criteria used to select the indicators.
- ii. With regard to the type of information needed to answer each EQ, effort was given to maximize the use of available relevant and reliable documentary information, so as to be more efficient in the collection of primary information.
- iii. There were different units of analysis.
- iv. For each EQ, in most cases, more than one possible method (quantitative and qualitative) for collecting data was proposed to better generate useful information.

## 4.5 The Evaluation design

The design of the evaluation considered the following:

- i) The type of EQ: descriptive and normative;
- ii) The availability of an information-rich baseline;
- iii) Unavailability of a comparison group;

Initially a before-and-after design was proposed and done, both for descriptive and normative EQs as relevant; normative questions would be assessed against a criterion or standard.

The before-and-after design, (often called pre-design and post-design, and Pretest–Posttest Project group), without comparison group, was based on the comparison of the beneficiary group involved in the project before and after intervention. It was to allow investigating the characteristics of the individual beneficiaries before and after ACORDAR intervention, whether or not there has been an increase in the value of indicators. It entailed analyzing which elements (mechanisms under given contexts) of the intervention included in the ACORDAR TOC have contributed to the results (Realist approach) as well as of the types of internal and external factors that influenced those changes.

### 4.5.1 Use of mixed methods

The methods used for the rigorous generation of high quality (accurate) information and credible evidence corresponded to the SOW's EQs, considering the three months evaluation period as well as some other practical and empirical issues.

The Realist evaluation approach, the EQs and the nature of the ACORDAR TOC and intervention made it necessary to employ a mixed-method and flexible methodological evaluation approach i.e. appropriate and (empirically) feasible qualitative and quantitative methods were precisely identified, designed and timely and optimally combined so as to gradually generate valuable and meaningful findings, provide greater learning opportunities, draw (externally) valid conclusions, and useful recommendations (learning) which USAID Economic Growth Office could apply to its future agricultural development activities. In few words, the learning goal of the Realist approach's mixed-methods employed allows for a much more objective approach to the performance evaluation of ACORDAR than would a supposedly more 'objective' quantitative, positivist and rigid empirical approach.

In some instances, qualitative analysis was done to explain quantitative analysis' findings (e.g. interviews with relevant stakeholders such as CATIE, ATLANTIC, Super La Colonia, etc.); in other cases qualitative methods (e.g. study of cases) were employed to facilitate a proper and valid identification of the interpretation by program beneficiaries of the goods and services provided by ACORDAR, given the meanings attached to their changing contexts e.g. Cooperativa Agropecuaria de Producción de Hortalizas (COPRAHOR), FEM, etc. In other words, although not ethnographic method has been adopted<sup>4</sup>, emic and etic approaches<sup>5</sup> were combined to try to get a better

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<sup>4</sup> The primary (epistemological) goal of the evaluation was not to learn about the world of the beneficiary producers and their communities and how this world was influenced by ACORDAR activities, from their own perspectives; though carrying out this



understanding of at least the most ACORDAR-directly-involved-aspects of the beneficiaries' conceptions; however the etic approach clearly dominated as the whole evaluation approach is fundamentally based on testing the ACORDAR TOC which, as such, is obviously external to the cultural system of most of ACORDAR individual and collective beneficiaries at the local level.

The team also dedicated much time to intense, careful and stimulating discussions and reflections on the findings, own interpretations of the information generated, and always tried to reach a common perspective on the evaluation methodology and results as the fieldwork was carried out and the analysis sessions were held. Difficult technical issues were resolved and agreements were reached, especially with regard to the sampling universe and the wording of the survey's questions.

#### a. Quantitative methods

The use of quantitative methods and its possible data findings will provide the rigor and establish the scale of outcomes, without necessarily adopting a positivist approach. The use of this method and its instrument were also previously assessed with reference to other relevant data sources/surveys (e.g. population and agricultural census, other public surveys), studies (e.g. women insertion in national labor market) and the program's M&E and database information, to check for consistency.

The program's database was used for the identification of the sampling universe, after it was presented to the evaluation team at the CRS office, and a special visit was done to the CRS office in Estelí.

#### Survey tenets:

Direct primary information was collected from target individual producers (male and female) through a survey. A questionnaire was formulated (see Annex 4), questions were coded, and the instruments pre-tested and adjusted in a surveyors training workshop<sup>6</sup> with the participation of ACORDAR producers. Some of the questions had options for the surveyed male or female producers to provide further interpretations of the initial responses given; this would allow the evaluation team, from an emic perspective, the possibility of identifying some of the producers' own conceptions and patterns of behavior regarding the issues being researched.

The first phase of ACORDAR targeted 5400 beneficiaries and added 1600 more for the second phase for a total of 7000 beneficiary producers. Initially the evaluation's universe population was considered to be the ACORDAR's "baseline" producers (before-after design), estimated in a total of 2297. The baseline universe is formed by

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type of (learning) evaluation research would indeed provide much deeper and richer interpretation of ACORDAR's observable "results", as reconstructed by the beneficiaries themselves; the EQs could then be answered (without previous EQs-related hypotheses having to be pre-identified by the evaluation team) from the perspective of actual beneficiaries which would more productive for better designing future ACORDAR-type of interventions. Some development programs have adopted ethnographic methods as part of their implementation strategies.

<sup>5</sup> An emic approach attempts to understand components of a cultural system from the perspective of the group being studied. The etic approach, on the other hand, analyzes a cultural system with research paradigms brought by the researcher from outside of that system (Pelto and Pelto 1978).

<sup>6</sup> This first random exercise was made to select 10 beneficiaries, to carry out the survey pilot, but most of the beneficiaries selected were not found in their communities: some had emigrated to other cities and countries; other had worked only at the beginning of the first phase, and others said they had never worked with ACORDAR. A similar situation occurred during the survey fieldwork; see below.



two sub-groups: the originally surveyed baseline producers (1786) of the baseline study at the outset of ACORDAR Phase-I, and the Technoserve baseline producers (511) added to the ACORDAR database at the outset of Phase-II. More than 10193 producers are incorporated the ACORDAR database, all of which have received at least one service or good by the program; out of them about 7700 were formally accounted by CRS as “direct beneficiaries” as they met the criteria of having made at least one sale.

Only baseline producers were initially selected to be randomly surveyed with the purpose of delving with more rigor into the details of program performance, under a before-after approach, so as to be able to hopefully identify results which might have been directly generated by ACORDAR.

However, during fieldwork it became increasingly difficult to find the original baseline producers. It had become apparent for the evaluation team that it was not going to be possible to find them given time and resource constraints. A deep analysis of the situation was made, including a review of a previous USAID’s quality assessment of the ACODAR database (the assessment was presented to USAID). It was concluded that it was imperative to change the universe and sampling strategy, as well as to design an alternative sampling strategy. A special interim report was presented to USAID, with the purpose of informing and assessing the survey fieldwork’s progress and challenges (including concrete examples of missing baseline producers and other database inconsistencies), analyze the situation and provide a statistically justified alternative proposal for approval.


For the new design, the new universes were, simultaneously, the 7700 “direct beneficiaries”, as well as the more the 10193 producers who were attended by ACORDAR independently of whether or not they made sales; both were simultaneous statistically and conceptually valid sampling universes. The originally selected survey beneficiaries were replaced by others living in the same communities, and so on.

The survey was finally characterized by a sex-stratified sampling size of 386 producers which was more than enough for achieving a quality of 95/5 for both universes (see Annex 5 for the respective sampling size estimations). A separate survey results report was formulated and submitted to USAID, including the SPSS database.

#### b. Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods were applied to gather qualitative information to answer specific issues as presented in the EQs/methods matrix, to complete and/or deepen (“how” and “why”) the explanation of topics rose by the survey. Focus groups, interviews and studies of some exemplary cases or experiences were the selected information collections tools and carried out with producer groups, cooperative enterprises, municipal governments, partners, service providers and others. The methods were employed as follows:

- ✓ Relevant literature searching (in national and international electronic databases and asking for printed material), review and/or content analysis, especially for the identification of program context and TOC and its assessment, and for assessing the more subjective aspects related to effectiveness, performance, and impact of the ACORDAR program.

- ✓ Focus groups and in-depth interviews of relevant stakeholders, around some relatively common parameters derived from the EQs and evaluation purposes, taking into consideration the diversity of stakeholders, geographical locations, crops, intervention types, etc.
  - At the outset of the focus groups sessions, the ACORDAR TOC was summarily presented to them by the evaluation team facilitator, as having being a working (paradigmatic) proposal of the ACORDAR program to all producers so as to initiate a truly reflective dialogue and better identify meanings, behavioral patterns and TOC-relevant lessons learned. Focus groups were carried out with cooperative and producers organization leaders in Estelí (working with CRS, CARITAS, FEM, ASDENIC, CAFENICA), Matagalpa (working with TNS, CECOCAFEN, CAFENICA, FEM, CECOSEMEIN), Tuma-La Dalia (working with LWR, TNS, CRS, CECOCAFEN, ADDAC, CECOSEMAM), San Jose de los Remates (working with TNS, CAFENICA, Coop. Wiscoyol, COMULSAN, etc.), Nueva Guinea (working with TNS, APROTUNG, etc.), Jinotega (working with AG, CRS, LWR, TNS, SOPPEXCA, CECOCAFEN, etc.), etc.
 
  - The main ACORDAR actors interviewed were staff members of all the consortium members, other partner organizations (AG, CARITAS, FEM, SOPPEXCA, CECOCAFEN, ODESDAR, etc.), CIAT, CATIE, Municipal governments (San Jose de los Remates, La Trinidad, etc.) other stakeholders (PROMIPAC, etc.) and input and serviced suppliers (ATLANTIC, Supermercado La Colonia, etc.) who have a thorough knowledge of the TOC on which project interventions was based.
- ✓ Identification and analysis of relevant exemplary cases to deepen explanations (“how” and “why”)<sup>7</sup>. The cases were selected given the plausible or logical links between their components (contexts, processes and meanings) and the ACORDAR TOC, given the relevant EQs. The experiences were also chosen because they supposedly generated significant changes and results (short, medium and long term), and also with the purpose of lessons learning. Among the experiences analyzed were COPRAHOR, FEM, CECOOPSEMEIN, etc.

The qualitative methods were flexibly employed as ongoing data collection and analysis generated new interpretations and relevant hypotheses and questions and therefore new needs of additional information and eventual findings; some original hypotheses needed to be abandoned as they became irrelevant. These methods allowed grasping field-level reality as perceived by target producers and associations and/or other stakeholders. In

<sup>7</sup> Methodologically (see Gundermann 2001), cases can be selected for either illustrative purposes about a more general issue (e.g. cross-cutting theme about value chain development) or for its intrinsic value (e.g. a successful case regarded as such by ACORDAR itself), or for a combination of both reasons. Qualitative and quantitative data was used to strengthen both the internal validity (evaluator team’s interpretation being what it means to those providing it) and the external validity (representativeness or generalizability) of the analysis’ conclusions.



Annexes 6 and 7 some (due to space considerations) of the results/transcriptions of the application of these methods are presented.

## **5 Findings**

The findings are presented according to the main issues and/or key areas raises in the SOW and EQs (see EQs Matrix in Annex 2 and 3).

### **5.1 Beneficiary Selection**

ACORDAR beneficiaries were selected attending several criteria defined by both the consortium members and the grassroots organization to which they belong.

Among the main beneficiary selection criteria defined by the consortium organizations are: i) areas with less than on average 10 hectares of land, located in ACORDAR intervention area and in vulnerable zones, and producing any of the ACORDAR production chains (vegetables, fruits, roots and tubers, beans, coffee and cocoa); ii) use of inappropriate value-adding and production technologies and inappropriate use of pesticides; and iii) low level of agricultural competitiveness due to poor economies of scale, inefficient production and post-harvest infrastructure, lack of access to market intelligence, weak organizational structures, limited access to credit and financial services, limited family capital to invest in post harvest infrastructure and low production volumes considering the demand of final buyers.

Overall, the selection method was the following:

- i) Each consortium member was assigned a target number of beneficiaries, considering their technical and administrative capacity, and experience in the relevant types of interventions and territories. That is the reason why each consortium member has more presence in some municipalities than in others. For example, CRS is found in central and north areas of the country where it had previously implemented other projects;
- ii) In the second stage, each consortium member selected a number of first and second level organizations (associations, cooperatives and cooperative unions) with which to develop its interventions. For example, CRS and LWR worked with sub-partners (central cooperatives, NGOs and associations); most of them had worked previously with CRS and LWR.
- iii) The next stage consisted in the selection of grassroots organizations by partner organizations and in some cases, by tier organizations. Most of the selected organizations were multiple services cooperatives which are members of the second-tier organizations; for example the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (SOPPEXCA), consists of 12 small cooperatives, but only five (5) participated in the project. The number of beneficiaries assigned by LWR did not allowed for the incorporation of more beneficiaries. In the case of SOPPEXCA, cooperatives selection was made taking into account some administrative, organizational and governance performance criteria as well as the performance of their functions within the overall organization.

ii) The final step was the selection of individual beneficiaries. They were selected by cooperative enterprises taking into account the above mentioned consortium-defined selection criteria and other criteria defined internally in the cooperative, such as: have no debts with the cooperative, capacity to contribute to project investments costs, and willingness to learn and report on the results of activities undertaken. In some cases, non-selected members of cooperatives were upset but this situation was resolved when some services were to be provided by the project to all cooperative members, such as the provision of training and technical assistance<sup>8</sup>.

Targeting was done mostly by cooperatives and partner organizations, the process was rapid and based on the knowledge these organizations had on their partners and the experience gained by their participation in previous projects implemented by consortium member organizations.

In late 2007, the 5400 beneficiary producers had the following (baseline extrapolated) profile: average net income (generated only by the crops supported by ACORDAR) of 1,786 beneficiary producers was less than US\$ 1,490 per year; 15% had negative revenues, 68% had incomes of less than \$ 1500 per year, and 8% had incomes below \$ 8 per day; 5% of producers had an average annual income of more than US\$ 6,000 (U.S. \$ 16 per day). This latter layer was composed of medium producers, and possibly some large producers were also incorporated as beneficiaries, following a strategy to facilitate the implementation of the value chain approach<sup>9</sup>

In the second phase of the project more than 1,600 beneficiaries were incorporated based in the same procedure, and considering the following criteria: i) the possibility that the cooperative would reach acceptable levels of financial and institutional sustainability over the life of the project; ii) Capacity for rapid insertion into the market and/or expansion; and iii) the ability to link with others who were working already with the consortium or have recently graduated and could share market contacts or channels and processing infrastructure (post-harvest); and iv) have ability to integrate a growing number of producers, "ready for the market", of a new crop of value chain (e.g. cocoa). Based on these criteria partner organizations and their client cooperatives were selected, thereby automatically selecting their cooperative producer members as ACORDAR beneficiaries.

In the first phase about 85% of farmers had already participated in other USAID supported projects (e.g. Food Security program/MSU). Producers who were incorporated into the second phase never benefited from USAID projects, though they have been by other cooperation agencies' interventions. For example, the multiple services cooperative COOPROCAFUC, integrated by 137 cocoa producers in El

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<sup>8</sup> "At times some cooperative members were upset by the criteria we used to select the beneficiaries of the project, but ultimately most of them received some benefit, through technical assistance, participation in Field Schools, among others." (Erick Morales Rivera, Project Officer at SOPPEXCA).

<sup>9</sup> According to Mark Lundi (ACORDAR/CRS's CIAT adviser): "Considero que el targetting fue bastante efectivo. En algunos casos hay mezcla de productores más pequeños y mayores. En términos empresariales eso no es necesariamente malo, sencillamente porque da mayor sostenibilidad al negocio, o sea es complementario. Es importante poder ofertar un volumen constante de productos. Y si solo se tienen productores que tienen menos de 1 hectárea por familia, es bien complicado manejar volumen en ciertos productos; entonces si hay unos que tienen 2 o 3 hectárea, permite tener ciertas ventajas en términos comerciales, y eso es importante. Muchas veces esos sistemas mixtos, podríamos decir, terminan siendo más efectivos; creo que es importante en el targetting."



Castillo, Rio San Juan, before joining ACORDAR had worked with a project executed by IPADE.

In both phases of ACORDAR implementation, therefore, selected producers had already been development project beneficiaries.

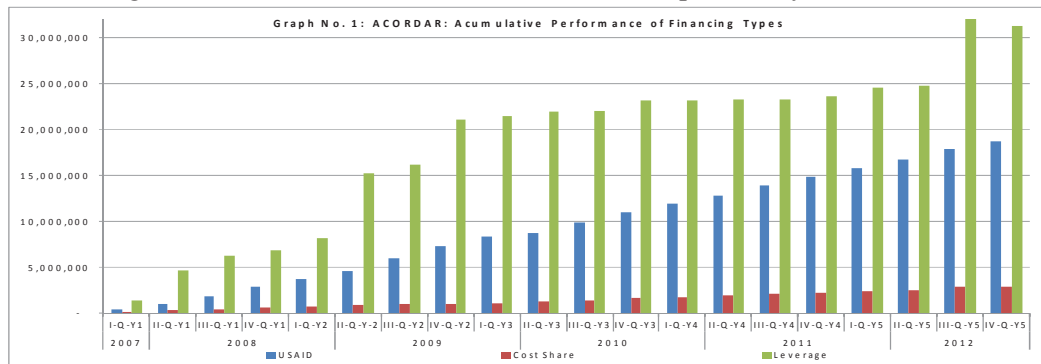
As seen above, 68% of targeted project beneficiaries had income of less US\$ 1500 per year, less than US\$ 4.1/day i.e. twice the poverty line according to the international minimalist economic criteria of the US\$ 2/day poverty line; there was no data estimated regarding the percentage of producers below this poverty line. Beneficiary producers might also have other sources of agricultural and non-agricultural (and off-farm) income apart from the net income generated by ACORDAR-supported crops/value chains. A major proportion of targeted producer beneficiaries were therefore not poor, though if a more valid concept of poverty is considered (including the dimensions of vulnerability and empowerment, as done by the World Bank or the human poverty indicators of UNDP), most of them are poor; many of the beneficiary producers were located in the poorest municipalities, living in communities far from urban centers.

Mr. Jefferson Shriver (ACORDAR Director for the first phase) commented in this regard: *“In my opinion, the issue was to continue accompanying groups who were in entrepreneurial processes to finish them properly. It was only 30 months, if we have known that it was going to be for 5 years, maybe we would have started with poorer producers, but we continue with our relationships with those who were already on their way”*.

The evaluation team also found that 7,000 beneficiaries is an adequate number of producers for an intervention of this magnitude, given its organizational arrangements, provided a five years implementation period is planned from project start. The value chain approach, due to the complexity of some of its components, especially of those related to downstream of the value chain, require an ongoing technical and financial support for a long period of time.

## 5.2 Leverage funding

As already identified by the mid-term evaluation report, funds were finally mobilized or leveraged and combined in different ways: contributions in-kind and in cash, credit funds, etc. From a financial perspective, at completion of ACORDAR implementation, the program had accumulated financing from USAID of US\$18.78 million, with additional cost sharing (by partners and other NGOs and actors) of US \$ 2.92 million and leveraged funds of US\$31.28 million, for a total of practically US\$53 million. As it

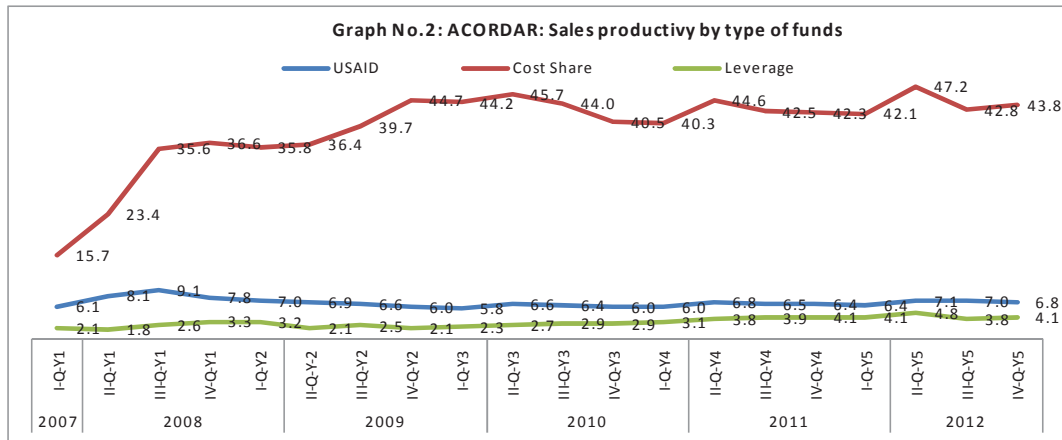


Source: CRS Quarterly Reports' data.



can be observed in the cumulative figures of Graph 1, along implementation, Leverage (L) funding became the greater contributing fund (1.6 times the USAID investment) and grew much more than Cost Sharing (CS) funds and even than USAID financing. For each USAID dollar invested, US\$ 1.66 was collected as L funds and the ratio of municipality-L funds<sup>10</sup> (US\$20,373,889) vs. USAID funds was 1.08.

As can be expected (given its much higher absolute contribution), along the implementation period (See Graph No. 2), each dollar of USAID and leverage (municipality) funds were much less productive in generating sales as compared with the very high productivity of each cost share US dollar (more than 40 times in sales value), which also maintained its high sales productivity during most of the implementation period; each USAID dollar started with a sales productivity of 6.1 times and immediately reached its highest level (9.1) but since then it decreased down to 6.8 times per US\$ dollar. The leverage funds' productivity started low (due to its higher investment levels) but increased up to more than 4 times in sale generation capacity by the final implementation year. These are normal productivity results.



Source: CRS Quarterly Reports' data.

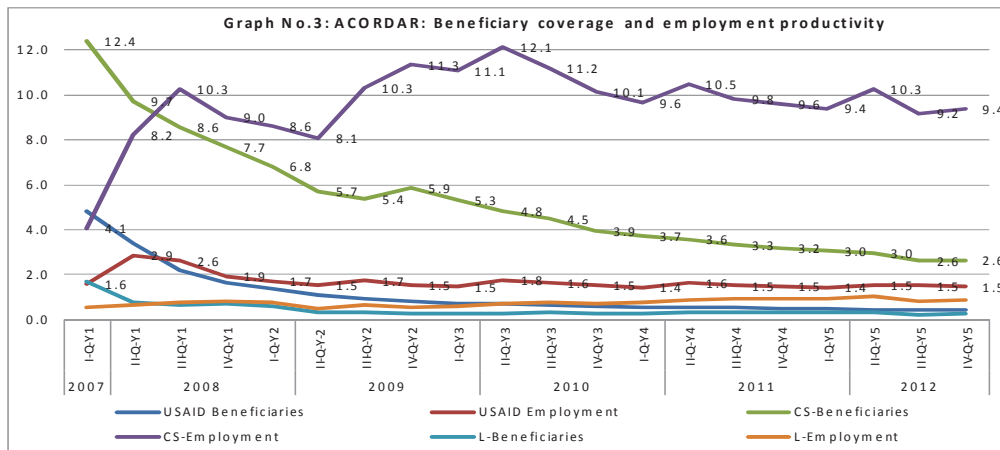
With regard to beneficiaries coverage (see Graph No. 3), CS funds naturally started at a high level of contribution to beneficiaries coverage and then (accumulatively) dropped to 2.6 beneficiaries per US\$ 1,000.0, but still it always kept a higher level than those of USAID and leverage funds which both started at a lower level and decreased to just 0.4 times or less. ACORDAR invested in total US\$ 6,872 in each beneficiary, and USAID contributed with US\$ 2,436.

In the case of employment productivity, CS is also more productive but practically maintained a level of more than 9 jobs generated per US\$ 1,000.0, whereas again both USAID and leverage funds' employment productivity decreased to 1.5 and 0.9 times levels respectively. Each permanent employment generated by ACORDAR cost US\$ 1,934.0, 35% of which was financed by USAID.

USAID funds were thus relatively less productive over time in generating sales and employment as compared to the performance of L funds (and CS ones), even considering that the municipality funds grew faster and reached a much higher absolute

<sup>10</sup> Funds related to the 2008 agreements with 25 municipal governments and public-private sectors to support the development of value chains through investments, under the concept of leveraged funds.

value. Despite their lowest funding share, CS funds did not have a more productive beneficiaries-coverage performance.



Source: CRS Quarterly Reports' data.

### 5.3 ACORDAR Interventions

#### 5.3.1 Interventions in the beneficiary producers' farms

Survey results show that up to 96% of producers across all value chains might have been trained and/or participated in ACORDAR's production and business capacity building activities (see Table 1). Practically all surveyed producers received Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) technical assistance to improve yields and production techniques; moreover, up to 5% of these producers received technical assistance for at least two value chains.

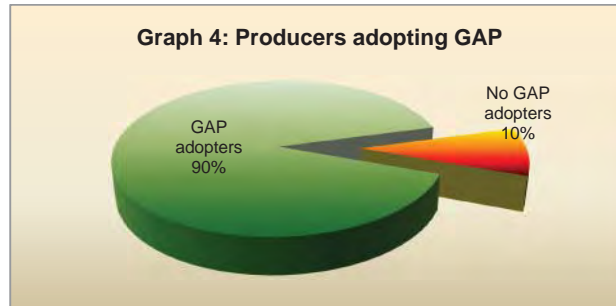
Table 1: ACORDAR interventions in value chains

| Value Chain | Capacity building | Equipment | Infrastructure | New technologies | Credit | Marketing advice | Water Infrastructure | GAP technical assistance | Production certification | Other |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Coffee      | 34                | 20        | 13             | 9                | 16     | 22               | 13                   | 49                       | 7                        | 4     |
| Beans       | 97                | 26        | 14             | 10               | 45     | 31               | 35                   | 98                       | 9                        | 26    |
| Vegetables  | 123               | 72        | 26             | 81               | 23     | 44               | 77                   | 129                      | 14                       | 26    |
| Fruits      | 41                | 8         | 2              | 1                | 0      | 8                | 8                    | 30                       | 3                        | 7     |
| Cocoa       | 14                | 8         | 1              | 1                | 2      | 5                | 1                    | 18                       | 3                        | 6     |
| Roots       | 32                | 13        | 2              | 5                | 10     | 20               | 9                    | 38                       | 7                        | 5     |
| Musacea     | 28                | 7         | 1              | 2                | 1      | 16               | 4                    | 43                       | 2                        | 3     |
| Total       | 369               | 154       | 59             | 109              | 97     | 146              | 147                  | 405                      | 45                       | 77    |
| %           | 96,3              | 40,2      | 15,4           | 28,5             | 25,3   | 38,1             | 38,4                 | 105,7                    | 11,7                     | 20,1  |

Source: ACORDAR Evaluation producers survey, 2012.

ACORDAR has been successful in promoting GAP; as can be seen in Graph 4, 90% of producers manifested that they are implementing GAP techniques in their farms.





Source: Evaluation producers survey 2012

Table 2 shows GAP techniques promoted by ACORDAR. Live barriers (66%) and burning prevention (59.5%) are the techniques more frequently implemented by producers. Also, up to 90% of producers are implementing environmental improvement activities at the farm level.

Table 2: GAPs implemented

|                 | Micro irrigation | Live barriers | Dead barriers | Dikes | organic fertilizers | Natural pest management | Vermicompost | Burning prevention |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Total Producers | 141              | 253           | 166           | 112   | 135                 | 110                     | 56           | 228                |
| %               | 36.8             | 66.1          | 43.3          | 29.2  | 35.2                | 28.7                    | 14.6         | 59.5               |

ey, 2012.

Producers have also manifested having: reduced production costs (53%); improved environmental conditions (reforestation and clean environment) (45%); experimented yields increases; (35%); gradually recovered soil fertility and reduced soil erosion (31%); achieved a more efficient use of water resources (23%). All these results contribute to agricultural sector development (productivity, production and income), especially of the value chains supported and their small and medium producers.

### 5.3.2 Interventions in the cooperative enterprises

A critical review of ACORDAR program documents of all types, interviews, studies of particular cases and focus groups all show that infrastructural investments, as well as organizational and marketing capacity development activities directed to support cooperative enterprises (and producer associations) have been highly valued and successful in capitalizing them (provided the actual transference of property rights by CRS/ACORDAR). Moreover, infrastructural investments also have positive secondary effects upon at the community level either by generating primary and secondary employment or by the provision of services to non-associated producers at better terms or having access to them for the first time at the local level.

### 5.3.3 Water infrastructure investments

A small proportion of surveyed producers reported having benefited from micro-irrigation investments (36.8%) though some manifested in focus groups that their particular needs were not well taken into consideration and even some rejected the support offered as the technical design and/materials were not considered appropriate to their specific circumstances. Regarding the water infrastructural investments directed to improve access to water, only 46.5% of surveyed producers (men and women) reported they contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of women, 2.6% did not believe it was so, and 50.9% were no beneficiaries of this kind of intervention. Women



and men producers interviewed in the municipalities of Estelí and Pueblo demonstrated however that these investments were very valuable for them, though their quality and/or management were not the best as some of them were broken within months of having been constructed and needed to be repaired. Not all of these investments had local government support when established though some are expected to receive their support for fixing them.

#### **5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation System**

CRS, with the participation of all consortium members, partners organizations, cooperative enterprises and final beneficiaries, defined and formulated ACORDAR M&E system's concepts, methods and instruments. Monitoring the formulated indicators, assumptions and risks related to the different hierarchical levels of the chain of results, was truly a titanic task which was only possible due to the willingness and interest of all stakeholders.

The M&E system was designed with the purpose of permanently and opportunely registering the numbers, use and application of the products and services provided to ACORDAR beneficiaries as well as the changes they generated during program implementation. Going backwards, from the last beneficiary, data was gathered and aggregated while moving to the finest aggregation levels until it became useful decision making information. The M&E system's methodology document provided the needed operational guidelines; a baseline elaborated in year 1 registered the initial situational beneficiary data and served as a reference point for the assessment of progress along ACORDAR implementation.

Among the key ACORDAR M&E indicators are: production area, production volumes generated, agricultural products sales, net income and employment. For the monitoring of results indicators (the most operational) a database was established for registering the values of these indicators for each of the producers incorporated in the Project and making comparison with baseline values, to assess implementation progress.

This database is very far reaching and contains 4 sub-groups of producer beneficiaries data: baseline, outstanding producers, "direct beneficiaries" (have made one sale) and others (have received at least one service or good from ACORDAR); it also contains very useful information for evaluation and learning purposes. However, as already mentioned above, its quality needs to be improved: survey fieldwork experience showed that some coded beneficiaries of either of these groups were not found or manifested not having worked with ACORDAR. It seems that much emphasis was given to updating data on the more outstanding producers as compared to the other sub-groups', thereby shedding some doubts as to the accuracy of the beneficiaries' results data which was being regularly reported.

Quarterly progress reports were also formulated and shared with consortium members and partners organizations. These reports were jointly analyzed in quarterly working sessions by all consortium members, which demonstrated a development-results-oriented management approach. These were important meetings in which each organization's implementation progress in achieving planned results was assessed, favorable and unfavorable contextual factors were analyzed, particular producers'

significant changes were presented, and experiences and lessons were shared. Next-period planning was also carried out in these meetings.

The M&E system adopted a participatory approach which facilitated permanent communication and allowed for the creation of social and human capital among actors<sup>11</sup> participating in the management of the system in the different project organizational structure's hierarchical levels. The evaluation team, however, was told by some local partners' technical officers that not enough project information circulated at the field level and that some information requirements were not included in the M&E system.

## 5.5 Environmental practices

Survey results show (see Table 3) that up to 96% of producers manifested that there have been environmental improvement at the farm level as a result of GAP promotion and other relevant ACORDAR activities (see interventions section). 31% stated that there has been a reduction of soil erosion and that its fertility has recovered, and 23% say that they are making more efficient use of water resources.

**Table 3:**  
Producers: improved farms' environmental conditions

|       | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| Yes   | 369       | 96.3       |
| No    | 14        | 3.7        |
| Total | 383       | 100.0      |

Source: Evaluation survey data

Among the environmental practices (see Table 4), reforestation and conservation are the more frequently implemented practices (87%); other practices are implemented in more than 50% with the exception of honey water treatment.

**Table 4: Environmental Practices**

|                 | Agro-ecological practices | Honey water treatment | Less use of pesticides | Rational water use techniques | Chemical residues treatment | Use of unharmed agrochemicals | Reforestation and conservation |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total Producers | 242                       | 33                    | 192                    | 214                           | 208                         | 245                           | 332                            |
| %               | 63.2                      | 8.6                   | 50.1                   | 55.9                          | 54.3                        | 64.0                          | 86.7                           |

Source: ACORDAR Evaluation producers survey, 2012.

## 5.6 The Cooperative model and value chain development.

Cooperative organizing is a long lasting organizational tradition (since 1928) in Nicaragua, especially in the rural sector. There has always been the question, however, as to the extent to which the associates truly adopt and live up to the cooperativism principles and values within their cooperatives. The cooperative model has also been supported by public policies to varying degrees, but this has been specially so since 2007.

<sup>11</sup> The ACORDAR M&E experience was being taken into consideration in other organization's working areas, improving the management of institutional quantitative information. For example, through training and alliances with other specialized organizations, ADDAC's M&E unit was strengthened highlighting the importance of using quantitative data for the formulation of reports, presentations and annual operative plans. Evaluating changes in income in the way ACORDAR did, was also something new both for producers and partner organizations and has generated learning for all the actors participating in the project; for example, ASDENIC manager, Eduardo Lopez, said that he has worked with other projects and has never monitored producers income annually, but occasionally until the end of the intervention.



ACORDAR cooperated with approximately 142 farmers associations and organizations, including cooperative enterprises and second and third level cooperatives organizations. There were different types of organizational models. Survey results show that up to 80% of producers manifested being organized, using different models: savings and credit cooperatives (6%), production cooperatives (43%), producers associations (13%), informal groups (1.3%), multisectoral (15%); 21% did not respond to the question or did not apply.

Regarding time having being organized, 12.5% of surveyed producers said having more than 10 years, 25% between 5-10 years, 38% less than 5 years; 22% were not applicable/no responded. This result shows that at least a third of producers already had organizational experience before working with ACORDAR.

Although the cooperative model has been the most popular model among producers, it confronts important challenges to facilitate the achievement of expected development results. The low educational levels reported by surveyed producers makes it more difficult to develop organizational capacities (organization, leadership, administration, marketing, etc.), which in turn diminishes the effective utilization of potential opportunities for better linking and inserting into their respective value chains.

However, positive ACORDAR cooperative development experiences (see the COPRAHOR illustrative case fully described and analyzed in Annex), show that it is possible to work with cooperatives and identify and reach common goals and objectives, provided the program's services and products were appropriate to their interests, needs and capabilities. Moreover, in most instances cooperative members<sup>12</sup> manifested in interviews and focus groups that there were not trade-offs between being supported by ACORDAR to develop entrepreneurial skills and a market oriented approach and developing as a cooperative social organization based on solidarity.

The systematic and comprehensive support provided by ACORDAR to many cooperative enterprises has been very effective and very positively valued by cooperative associates. Second-tier organizations and members of the consortium, in some cases, contributed to the achievements reached by the cooperative enterprises. The review of the files of the cooperative enterprises attended by TNS, for example, showed the rigor of the monitoring of their performance. All this account for the fact that many leaders and members of cooperatives acquired new knowledge and skills and strengthened their capabilities, regarding value chains development, organizational, administrative and leadership issues.

As seen above, cooperatives also played an important implementation role (individual beneficiary selection, development of large-scale interventions helping to generate economies of scale, monitoring of investments allocated to producers, etc.).

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<sup>12</sup> Members of at least 43 cooperative enterprises (30% of all cooperatives attended by ACORDAR) were interviewed.

## 5.7 Gender

The ACORDAR baseline study (17.9% women) showed that women represented up to approximately 25% of their organizations' membership. However, even if they were organized, they had almost negligible participation in each of the locally available citizenship participatory mechanisms. Male and female producers participated relatively more in community level mechanisms, and practically did not participate in the departmental level.

According to the baseline study, organized women had levels of education and of registered property rights similar as those of organized men's, and they also had an important participation in their own organizations' decision making processes and in their agro-enterprises' directorates (despite just being about 20% of the total partners).

Also, very few producer agro-enterprises had women affirmative action funds, and half of them offered permanent and temporary jobs to women although they offered it more to women than to men. Men and women received similarly very high level of training and financing services from their producers agro-enterprises though men performed better in the case of technological resources and assistance services; however, though the enterprises attended their men and women members in relatively equal terms, overall men had much more access (absolute gap) to all these services. One quarter of women was very poor but the daily net income of 58% of them was US\$ 4.1/day, twice as much the poverty line: they were not income-poor women.

Those results show gender biases with regard to women's economic, community, organizational-political (decision making), workplace and production (control of resources and access to services) status and roles. No information was gathered regarding home gender issues. However, they also show that ACORDAR's baseline beneficiary rural women were not necessarily systematically worse off than men and that they might have been improving their status and roles. In fact, these results are much more coherent with national studies which demonstrate a better positioning of women in national labor markets and poverty levels<sup>13</sup>. Survey data also show that ACORDAR's actual women beneficiaries have good educational levels, though there is a gap with relation to men (55.8%, 7.7% and 9.6% have primary, secondary and university level; men 58.9%, 17.8 and 5.7%, respectively).

Nevertheless, these biases have influenced ACORDAR's performance in several ways. Women's greater educational and organizational levels, for example, facilitated the implementation of especially the gender and the cooperative enterprises organization development components of the ACORDAR TOC; components which were nevertheless truly considered and implemented until the second phase of program implementation. Gender was introduced as a cross-cutting issue and the planned and budgeted implementation and dissemination of a formal ACORDAR gender policy and strategy began in 2011. On the other hand, the lack of an institutionalized gender approach in the producer organizations in the beans, tora and vegetables and fruits value chains was recognized as an important issue for program implementation according to ACORDAR reports.

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<sup>13</sup> Escoto, René M. (2010). Apertura Económica, Género y Pobreza en Nicaragua. Actualización del Perfil de Género de Nicaragua, UNIFEM, Managua.



Most beneficiary women, however, individually and collectively did seize and value highly those opportunities that were presented by ACORDAR interventions. The FEM and its client women cooperatives is a good example of such attitude: they already had gender awareness by when they started to work with ACORDAR but were able to get training and cooperative capacity building support and other investments from the project.

Women participation in ACORDAR has indeed been highly valued. Survey data shows that practically all men and women believe that the participation of women in ACORDAR activities has been important because of: the promotion of equal gender rights (30%); the development of production units (15%); human development (14%); women administrative capacity building (13%); women advancement (9%) women economic independence (8%), among other reasons; up to 67% of surveyed producers had some training in gender issues.

Survey results also show that almost 70% of surveyed men and women producers considered that ACORDAR's promotion of greater women participation did have an impact, especially at the household level (59.3%), although no open answers were provided by surveyed producers to illustrate this impact; however, effectiveness was regarded as lower at the organizational (29.8%), community (39.7%) and cooperative enterprise (24.8%) levels. Additionally, no negative backlash effects on ACORDAR implementation were seen by producers as a consequence of the primary effects mentioned above.

ACORDAR thus addressed its beneficiaries' gender inequalities in two (unplanned) phases. Gender issues were satisfactorily (though lately) mainstreamed into the design and operational processes and methodologies of ACORDAR implementation, including specific affirmative action activities. The program was successful in putting across its theory of change's gender component specially at the beneficiaries' own homes<sup>14</sup>, but not much in the other contexts which are also relevant for more equitable value chain development. Nevertheless, some women beneficiaries were properly empowered economically and institutionally, though more still needs to be done for impacting more widely on women's access to assets and decreasing gender inequality as originally expected.

## 5.8 Regional focusing

ACORDAR regional focusing was defined by poverty and food insecurity criteria, which implied having to attend isolated and not easily accessible regions. ACORDAR's TOC was fundamentally based in a value chain development strategy and economically important production chains were selected (coffee, beans) as well as other with much potential (vegetables, fruits, roots and tubers, musaceae).

An unavoidable consequence of selecting these value chains is that the attempt to better articulate them internally and improve the relative positioning of relevant producers,

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<sup>14</sup> Irma Lopex, a women leader of the COMUTRAD cooperatives supported by FEM, manifested: "Por ejemplo todo inicio cuesta. Yo le dije al principio que habían capacitaciones y el fue. Mi marido ha cambiado el rol ahora cocina antes no. Esto es un proceso, porque a como nos han acostumbrado a uno de ser dependiente. Por ejemplo las mujeres que el hombre le de todo. Es bonito tener sus realitos y decidir lo que quiere comprar. No hay necesidad de violar los derechos. La comunicación es la base fundamental para todo."



especially downstream the chain, implied covering a very wide area of the country. 50 municipalities and 8 departments were therefore considered ACORDAR intervention regions.

The coffee value chain covers the five northern departments of Nicaragua, where most of coffee production takes place. The region selected for the beans value chain, basically in the hands of poor rural families countrywide, was also the north, which is one of the most representative beans production regions. Vegetables and fruits are cultivated in all of the country. Most of cocoa and roots and tubers are geographically concentrated in particular regions but in distant places.

Under these circumstances, it would run against effectiveness to limit a value chain development intervention to a single municipality or small region. ACORDAR made extra efforts to try to attend all the chain-relevant regions chosen. However, the selection of the cocoa value chain, although there were highly valued and effective particular positive results were also reported by certain producers in some regions, does not seem to have been much efficient from a regional focusing point of view (very distant production areas), nor effective from the perspective of meaningfully contributing to the development of the chain, as compared with the results and efforts related to the other chosen production value chains. Participating cocoa producers meant attending most likely poor farmers living in distant places lacking many services and economic opportunities, however developing the chain with equity and inclusion considerations require a special intervention.

Regarding the selection of value chains, the livestock (milk and/or meat) value chain, given the same criteria of employment and income generation, might have been chosen as well, at least for the second phase. This selection would have entailed operating in the Departments of Boaco, Chontales and Nueva Guinea: from a regional point of view, there would have been scale economies as ACORDAR was already working with producers in Boaco and Nueva Guinea. Moreover, the chain was expanding its production and export levels and its governance structure and processes were unfolding steadily, which might have facilitated focusing on better integrating poorer producers to the value chain.

## **5.9 Contribution to income, employment and poverty reduction**

### ***Contribution to Income***

The goals of the project established for the **first** phase were: *5,400 rural impoverished families in 44 municipalities increase their income, secure permanent employment, and strengthen trades capacity in alliance with municipal governments and the private sector. (ACORDAR, Technical Application 2007).*

The goals of the project for the **second** phase were: *7,000 impoverished rural families from 50 municipalities increase their income, secure permanent employment and strengthen their commercialization capacities through the development of value chains in alliance with municipal governments and the private sector.*

After five years of implementation (2007 – 2012), ACORDAR contributed to the following significant results:

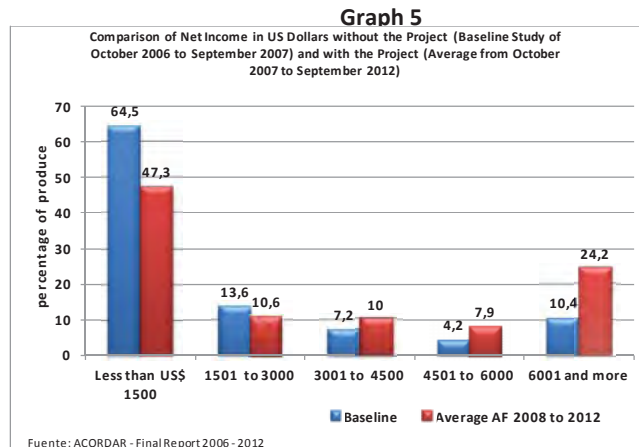
***Agricultural Productivity.***

The utilization of improved technology promoted by ACORDAR generated an increase in productive yields of up to 18%. Vegetables, coffee and beans were the products obtaining the largest increase in productivity, with 35.4%, 23% and 19%, respectively.

***Income.***

Using income as an useful impact indicator of development programs is somehow controversial as both there are difficulties in measuring it properly as well as in attributing its performance to a program’s intermediate results and outputs. Its usage by ACORDAR was related to the commercial-oriented nature of ACORDAR TO C (interview with M. Lundy, CIAT adviser). To assess then the performance of ACORDAR in this respect the analysis concentrates in two aspects: i) ACORDAR’s own analysis and reports regarding the income results achieved and/or accumulated along the implementation period; and ii) the evaluation’s own estimates of net income in the agricultural period 2011-12.

ACORDAR contributed to increasing net income of 7,711 producers (19% women) as a result of the investments made in technology, infrastructure, value added and commercialization. The 75% of the producers increased their income by 20% over the baseline figure. Some 60.7% of the farmers supported by the project increased their income by 20% over the baseline figure, fulfilling 80.9% of the project target (75%). The average net annual income<sup>15</sup> of the farmers increased 97.4% (*ACORDAR project Final Report October, 2012*). The average for Fiscal Years (FY) 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 with the project was US\$5,145.34; generating an additional US\$2,539.26,



compared to the baseline figure of US\$2,606.08. As a consequence the percentage of producers in the scale of less than US\$ 1500 decreased in 26,7%; those in the 1501-3,000 range decreased in 22,6%, the 3001-4500 range increased in 28%, the 4501-6,000 range in 88% and the last range group increased in 132,7% (see Graph 5).

The results of the evaluation survey show that: 47.8% of producers reached an annual net income<sup>16</sup> of US\$6000 or more; 2.1% from US\$ 4501 to US\$ 6000; 1.3% from US\$ 3001 to US\$ 4500; 1.3% from US\$ 1501 to 3,000; 43.1% from US\$0 to US\$ 1500; for

<sup>15</sup> Net income was calculated by ACORDAR using a methodology which was permanently employed along all the implementation period, based on actual records at the field level but based upon a panel of 471 producers who were always reporting sales.

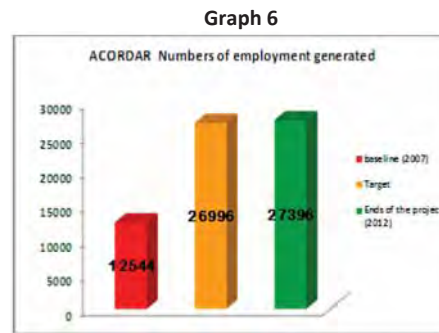
<sup>16</sup> Survey’s net income was estimated discounting from the 2011-12 income the production costs and sales costs, according to producers’ own recalls.



4.4% of the producers the income was negative. These results are similar to ACORDAR’s final report results.

**Employment.**

At the end of its implementation, ACORDAR contributed (see Graph 6) to the generation of 27,396 permanent jobs<sup>17</sup>, registering an increase of 1,5% over the target proposed (26,966 jobs), which implied 14,852 jobs (118,4%) over the 2007 baseline (12,544 jobs). All jobs were generated by the main chains supported by ACORDAR: coffee (45,34%), beans (22.35%) and vegetables and fruits (15.83%) (See Table xxx). These chains were selected partly precisely because of their capacity to generate employment.



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As Mark Lundy said: *“If we selected coffee or vegetable was because both are labor intense activities, employing non-qualified labor; with the purpose of having a very important effect on employment. But I would say that the effect of poverty reduction is both by the participation of very small producers, and because of the issue of job creation.”*

Participation of women in employment generated by the project had a different performance between chains; coffee and bean chains generated the greatest percentage of jobs for women, with 65.87% and 28%, respectively.

**Food Security.** With ACORDAR support some producers have most likely improved the availability (surplus for self-consumption) of food in their homes. Their families are able to eat new types of food, more variety, in larger quantities, and more likely with higher levels of food safety. Others, as a result of their increased incomes as reported above, have greater accessibility to food.

Food utilization is more difficult to assess (at the household level). According to the ACORDAR final report, some 2,607 infrastructure projects were built for water for domestic use, production and value added processes and some 8,202 farmers and their families now have improved the access to better quality water. In any case, with regard to their livelihoods, only up to 12% of surveyed producers manifested (open answers) that they experimented improvements in terms of both, health and education, which might entail healthy food preparation education, and food, clothing and footwear; however these are not significant positive (proxy) indicators. In so far as the supported cooperatives were able to provide more health care benefits to women family members, they and their children might have been reached a healthier status to process food consumption; however here again more research would be needed to estimate this type of food security impact. Finally it should be pointed out that ACORDAR supported food security emergencies in regions affected by natural disasters providing producers of some kind of seeds and other inputs.

<sup>17</sup> In the baseline study, a permanent employment was defined as entailing 220 labor days/year.



In general terms, therefore, ACORDAR has indeed contributed to food security among its beneficiaries.

### **5.10 Sustainability**

Sustainability is just a component of a truly "cultural transformation" of ACORDAR's beneficiary producers and their associations, which can only be evaluated some years after its recent closing of operations. The other two components of the institutionalization of the changes which might be attributed to ACORDAR are routinization and diffusion and their assessment requires other (especially ethnographic) evaluation methods. The present performance evaluation of ACORDAR limits itself to the sustainability issue.

In general it has become evident that as a result of ACORDAR investments in technology and technical assistance, marketing management capacity building, small and large scale infrastructure and equipments, farmers and their organizations have improved their relative positioning along all the stages of their respective value chains. The sustainability of the investments in the different stages of the value chains which were supported by ACORDAR, however, will be ultimately determined by the skills and ability of producers and their organizations to continue producing in sufficient quantities, in a staggered way, and with the quality and safety standards required by the markets; while at same time (i) maintaining the trade relations established and/or enhanced with buyers and (ii) obtaining competitive prices to cover production costs, including the acquisition of the resources required to continue chain activities.

The evaluation information gathered shows that:

- Most of goods and services provided by ACORDAR are being used by beneficiary producers and their organizations have already established the basic conditions for sustainability of their expected results in many instances. However, there are cases in which those products and services were delivered just in the last two years and the expected results had not yet been achieved and/or consolidated at the closing of project operations, jeopardizing the sustainability of ACORDAR's results.
- Infrastructures and equipment established are mostly functioning well and have sufficient extra capacity, allowing farmers to produce under safer conditions, carry out postharvest activities and add more value to their products, while ensuring compliance with national and regional buyers' quality and food safety requirements.
- Producers have indeed acquired new skills and knowledge, employ new production technologies and some have been able to get their seed production activities and/or farms certified. Effectively, producers interviewed in the focus groups stated that they are willing to continue applying them.

However, rigor is needed when dealing with the sustainability of technical assistance and the "adoption" of technology. In this regard, ACORDAR reports state that there are important "levels" or "degree" of technological "adoption". Use and a distinction though has to be made between the more precise technical terms of

“promotion”, “diffusion” and “rate of adoption” which are needed to truly ascertain this sustainability.

To measure the actual values of these concepts’ indicators in the case of the ACORDAR’s technical assistance provided to farmers (indicators which were not incorporated in ACORDAR’s M&E system), certainly require serial information and field work which was well beyond the scope and the terms of reference of this evaluation. Nevertheless, the evaluation survey found that 92.4% of producers manifested having adopted GAPs (76.9% in the case of women) for more than two years (see Table 5). Thus, although no proper adoption estimates can be done, there are basis to assert that ACORDAR’s technical assistance investment results will be sustainable.

**Table 5**  
**Numbers of producers who stated having adopted GAPs for two or more years**

| BPA                        | Men       |            | Women     |            |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                            | Frecuency | Percentage | Frecuency | Percentage |
| Producers adopting BPA     | 306       | 92.4       | 40        | 76.9       |
| Producers NOT adopting BPA | 25        | 7.6        | 12        | 23.1       |
| Total                      | 331       | 100.0      | 52        | 100        |

Source: ACORDAR Evaluation Producer Survey. 2012

- Many cooperative enterprises have indeed established, developed and maintained market relationships with important buyers and input and service suppliers, as described by ACORDAR reports. The evaluation team verified more precisely these results, for example, in the cases of COPRAHOR, Tomatoya, and COOPROJIN and their commercial relationships with the Colonia Supermarket and Walmart; and with suppliers as Tecnorriegos, Sagsa-Disagro Agritrade, RAMAC, Duwest and the Instituto Nicaragüense de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA). However, as it has been more clearly evident in the COPRAHOR study case (fully included in this report), vulnerability and lack of true “graduation”<sup>18</sup> of supposedly well performing cooperative enterprises shed doubts about the sustainability of the commercial relationships mentioned above.
- In so far as producers are implementing cooperative strategies to keep and cover the costs of the technical teams formerly supported by ACORDAR, it will be possible to continue assisting the associated producers in expanding the certification process. AG is a valid case of a producers association committed to employ their coffee revenues to finance technical assistance.
- Marketing alliances between cooperative enterprises and big buyers, some of which were based on relationships established by core members before that start of ACORDAR implementation, crystallized in different forms and a win-win mentality still does not dominate as an effective value or principle. Some buyers have a more utilitarian attitude towards the “alliance”, depending on the economic magnitude of

<sup>18</sup> ACORDAR final report recognizes that only 34 organizations (out of the 142 cooperatives which worked with the Program) were included in the business strengthening process, of which 28 (82%) “will have” their (medium term) Sustainability Plans approved by the leadership bodies and/or general assemblies of the organizations.



potential transactions with the cooperatives with a given value chain. The same would apply to alliances with input providers though in this case the cooperative enterprises are seen as valuable clients for the medium or long term.

- Though the nature and the win-win mentality of the 124 public - private alliances constructed and mostly directly sponsored by ACORDAR core members is diverse, in general a good negotiation and communication basis has been established for furthering this mentality in the future.
- The establishment and use of credit lines and revolving funds resulting from alliances with private national and international financial institutions, and geared to the ACORDAR-supported first and second level producers organizations' production, storage and marketing activities, constitute a base for sustainability. Likewise, the physical assets provided by ACORDAR to the cooperative enterprises have and will most likely continue being a useful instrument to leverage additional and complementary financial resources from conventional private banks and microfinance intermediaries to invest.

However, during the evaluation field work, some of the cooperative directorate members expressed concern to the evaluation team about the reservations they perceived from CRS regarding the actual transfer of the infrastructure, equipment and revolving funds' legal property rights to the cooperatives. Prolonging this situation might seriously affect sustainability prospects specially as trust and self-confidence might be damaged.

- The value chain governance commissions sponsored and/or strengthened by ACORDAR will also contribute to sustainability of results as the rules of the game will be established and sustained by chain stakeholders in a participatory way and producers cooperatives will also have an avenue for influencing relevant public policies. The support to the development of these commissions, however, was mostly focused in three value chains (beans, tubers and roots, and to some extent vegetables and fruits) so that the cocoa and musaceae value chains actors will have to make extra efforts to promote the development of their respective governance mechanism (the coffee value chain governance is already well developed) and the producers will not count with an institutional setup to maintain the results obtained with ACORDAR.
- In general terms, in those cases where farmers and their organizations have specialized in the production of a bundle of relatively similar products, acquired long-lasting productive, marketing and organizational skills and developed real business relationships with other relevant chain actors, including strengthened local business service providers, infrastructure, technology and capacity building investments seem to be more likely sustainable. That is the case, for example, of COPRAHOR which specializes in the production of a range of vegetable products (see again the full case below).
- The survey also showed that producers are very satisfied with the results and benefits achieved and are also willing to continue working in the same way to maintained them. As it can be seen in the Table below, more than 90% of surveyed producers responded positively to questions related to sustainability: continue

applying the production knowledge and techniques acquired, working conditions and personal and family livelihoods improvements, and community level positive secondary effects. The relatively low 42% response regarding the application of the marketing knowledge acquired, however, does constitute a warning signal against sustainability. At the individual level, as compared with their associations, producers are not as self-confident in their marketing skills acquired, implying that the achievements in the ACORDAR-supported value chains' marketing links might not be sustainable in the long run.

This is up to certain point understandable, as people organize precisely among other reasons to overcome individual weaknesses and vulnerabilities, but it also raises the question as to the effectiveness and sustainability of the results of capacity building activities with individual producers regarding marketing and business issues, as compared with production activities.

**Table 6:**  
**Opinions expressed by producers on sustainability issues regarding the support received from ACORDAR**

| Questions   | Total Producers | %    |
|---|-----------------|------|
| Will you continue applying the knowledge and techniques learned with ACORADR in your productive activities? | 369             | 96.3 |
| Will you continue marketing your products as learned now without the support of ACORDAR?                    | 163             | 42.6 |
| Has ACORDAR improved your working conditions and those of your family?                                      | 354             | 92.4 |
| Has ACORDAR supported the development of the potential of your other livelihoods?                           | 350             | 91.4 |
| Were there positive effects in your community as a result of the actions developed by ACORDAR?              | 374             | 97.7 |

Source: ACORDAR Evaluation Producers Survey, 2012.

## 6 Conclusions

With regard to the EQs and other issues considered particularly important, the evaluation team concludes, summarily (as there are many interrelated issues), as follows:

1. The ACORDAR TOC consisted of a set of **complementary and validated strategies** for the development of inclusive value chains which were based on the **accumulated** knowledge and experience of relevant development interventions and practitioners, especially of agencies like CIAT, CATIE and CRS itself. The “value chain” approach has its root up to a major extent in the cluster approach developed by Porter, but ACORDAR consortium members were able to synthesize a new and very integral approach and crystallized it in the Program’s TOC. [EQ # 1a].
2. Some of the TOC’s strategic components were not taken into consideration **until the second phase** of program implementation when new interventions instruments (Innovation Fund, water infrastructure investments) and areas of work were given priority (cooperative enterprises capacity building and graduation and gender). [EQ # 1a].

3. Core consortium members and their partners demonstrated having a **strong learning and knowledge management capacity** to pose relevant questions, make necessary changes (e.g. after the mid-term review) and develop and apply useful concepts, rigorous methods and effective instruments for program implementation.
4. The **initial** planning of ACORDAR for only a **2.5 years** period, **led to the selection** of producers who were poor under the wider concept of poverty (WB, UNDP), though strictly they were not so in terms of income (average daily income of US\$4/day). The selection of producers who already had working experience in their value chains' links was appropriate and allowed for achievement of concrete results in a **relatively short period** of implementation. Value chain development is a **complex** process; working with producers who are going to better articulate (generating and appropriating more value added) into value chains require periods of time longer than the assigned for the first phase, especially if they are poorer. [EQ # 1c].
5. **Value chains were selected**, in the first phase, considering that the consortium core members **already** had working experience in supporting producers in the respective agricultural products and regions by when ACORDAR was formulated; in the case of taro because of its **economic potential** at that moment. The latter was also a criterion taken into consideration for the selection of the cocoa chain for the second phase. The final selection was **appropriate** for achieving the development objectives proposed, as most of these chains have employment and income generation potential in the short-medium term. The livestock value chain could have reasonably be included. [EQ # 2c and EQ # 5a].
6. The **variety of intervention types** was well identified for the purposes of supporting the different actors involved in the developing of the selected value chains: infrastructural investments for cooperative enterprises and capitalization, production technical assistance and small-scale production investments for farmers, marketing capacity building for cooperative enterprises and producer associations, etc. This mixture of intervention types contributed to the achievement of ACORDAR's results. [EQ # 3]
7. The **alliances** between producer organizations and the financial and non-financial service providers, as well as with input suppliers (backward linkages), were a very important explanatory factor of ACORDAR's results: strategic market information was made available, long-term perspectives started to be developed, mutual trust was increasingly becoming necessary, etc. [EQ # 2b].
8. There are observable positive results in terms of **productivity increases** in many value chains. ACORDAR has contributed to the diffusion of many technologies and good technological practices indeed, though it remains to be estimated and evaluated. The **definite adoption** of these technologies by beneficiary producers cannot yet be established though the evidence provided by the survey responses points in that direction. [Conclusion related to EQ # 3].
9. In the cases where producers and their organizations have acquired long-lasting productive, marketing and organizational skills, ACORDAR's capitalization investments are more likely to be **sustainable**. In the cases where the producers



organizations and cooperative enterprises, other private financial and non-financial service providers and municipal governments are truly working together and sharing resources in the implementation of joint strategies, especially if under an effective value chain governance environment, the ACORDAR investments for achieving agricultural competitiveness, are more likely to be sustainable. [EQ # 1b].

10. ACORDAR TOC's **gender strategy** was successfully (though lately) implemented during the second implementation phase in terms of achieving the **mainstreaming** of gender issues in many cooperative enterprises, associations, partners and even consortium members' policies and institutional cultures as well as with regard to gender equity awareness within producers' homes; these results are partly explained by the fact that several cooperative organizations and partners were already conscious of gender issues. Although some women beneficiaries were empowered economically and institutionally, **more still needed to be done** for impacting more widely on women' access to assets (land) and decreasing gender inequality as originally expected. [Gender EQ].
11. The ACORDAR/CRS **database** is comprehensive, however its quality needs to be improved; the **M&E** system was effective and also comprehensive. [EQ # 4].
12. USAID funds were relatively less productive over time in generating sales and employment as compared to the performance of leverage and cost sharing funds. Despite their lowest funding share, CS funds did not have a more productive beneficiaries-coverage performance. [EQ # 1d].

## 7 Lessons Learned

Among the main lessons that can be derived from the implementation of ACORDAR for application to other USAID projects, including follow-on projects in the same country or sector and similar projects in other countries or sectors, are<sup>19</sup>:

1. A program staff and advisers' **willingness and capacity to learn** and tap useful knowledge contributes to the effectiveness of activities and the enrichment of the program's TOC.
2. The definition of the **program's timescale** is a determining factor of the producers targeting process.
3. Taking advantage of **previous experience** working with the selected value chains facilitated having positive results very early in the program implementation period (first phase) and this help **motivating** beneficiary producers and their associations, partners and even consortium core members to increasingly engage in project activities.
4. Attempting to make relatively underdeveloped value chains which cater basic agricultural food products of mainly household consumption to local markets, to

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<sup>19</sup> Lessons can be learned from different experiences directly linked to the EQs, but also with relation to other aspects related to the design and implementation of the program, as it was precisely stated in the EQ # 5b which has to do with lessons learned. Below each lesson learned is linked to an EQ when relevant.



cater to export market in the short-medium term, is a **very risky strategy** which might end up discouraging local producers and the further development of the chain. Although some basis were at the end established for the further development of the taro chain, its experience shows that greater support by ACORDAR ended up being needed to overcome unexpected external negative market factors which **are not unusual** in the international commodity markets.

5. The **maintenance of the alliances** between producer organizations and the financial and non-financial service providers, as well as with input suppliers, is fundamental for the **sustainability** of results. The maintenance of the alliances depends to a major extent on the capacities developed by the cooperative enterprises. More effort is needed for the creation of a truly and long lasting win-win mentality among these actors.
6. A cross-cutting **gender strategy** of working simultaneously with **both** male and female producer beneficiaries based on the gender-equity awareness and capacity of partners at the local level is effective in terms of identifying relevant, precise and potentially effective chain-links-tailored-made incentives to address the specific gender equity issues of each link of the value chain.
7. Late implementation of the gender strategy of a value chain development project **delays the achievement of the greater gender equity needed**, especially in terms of access to assets, services, credit and inputs, for developing inclusive and competitive value chains, even if prior and observable gender awareness exist among beneficiary producers and their organizations and cooperative enterprises.

## 8 Recommendations<sup>20</sup>

The evaluation team recommends USAID the following:

1. Any **value chain** development program should be planned for at least **5 years**, counting with the effective commitment of resources from all associates and partners; resource uncertainty tends to distort the coherent implementation of well developed TOCs. [EQ # 1a].
2. These programs should also work with **all relevant stakeholders** promoting governance processes and structures. [EQ # 1a y b].
3. The **ideal number of beneficiaries** should then depend on the number of producers operating in the chosen value chain, given due consideration to their geographical distribution. This is also recommended for consortium members' projects. [EQ # 1c].
4. From start, when possible, **cooperatives** should be linked directly with the exporting firms, and supported to establish solid and lasting agreements and contracts that

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<sup>20</sup> Recommendations could be identified with regard to each EQ, but also with relation to other aspects related to the design and implementation of the program, as it was precisely stated in the EQ # 5b which also has to do with recommendations. Below each recommendation is linked to an EQ when relevant.





- enable them to develop strategies and plans for production over the long term. [EQ # 1e].
5. Relatively **underdeveloped agricultural chains** catering to local markets should firstly graduate themselves in these markets before attempting to engage with the international commodity markets. [EQ # 2c].
  6. For the development of value chains it is effective to have a variety of **intervention types**, but the particular characteristics of individual beneficiary producers and their farms and household structures, including their relationships at the community level and with the municipal government, need to be carefully taken into consideration. [EQ # 3].
  7. Beneficiary producers' "**consumer sovereignty**" regarding the goods and services offered to them at practically no cost (no "price" being paid) need to be respected precisely in a market-oriented development program such as ACORDAR. Consortium members and local partners should be particularly careful in this regard.
  8. **Basic capacity building in cooperative enterprises** should be guaranteed first before they engage in serious or formal relationships with big buyers, intermediaries and/or financial and nonfinancial services providers while forging value chain alliances and developing governance mechanisms and structures. [EQ # 2b].
  9. Future programs of the type of ACORDAR should design mechanisms and methods and apply incentives for working more closely with relevant **managers and technicians** of big buyers, financial and non-financial service providers and input suppliers in the creation of a truly **win-win mentality** as a principle of the alliances being forged. [EQ # 2b].
  10. An (ethnographic) **impact evaluation in two years time** from now would provide useful knowledge about the extent to which cultural transformations (attitudes, beliefs, values, habits) have truly be made among ACORDAR beneficiaries in terms of the regular use and sustainability of the skills, practices and other capacities developed so far, including their diffusion beyond actual final beneficiaries. [EQ # 4].

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1

#### **Evaluación ACORDAR Taller con Partes Interesadas**

Centro Agroindustrial de Frijol, CECOOPSEMEIN  
(Sébaco, Matagalpa- Km 99, Carretera Panamericana)  
23 de Agosto del 2012.

Se inicia el Taller con la presentación del objetivo, y el Sr. Daniel Handel da las palabras de bienvenida por parte de AID. Posteriormente, se inicia la presentación del Equipo de Evaluación de ACORDAR, y posteriormente se realiza la presentación de los participantes y sus expectativas.

#### **EXPECTATIVAS**

1. **Marvin:** Compartir la información obtenida de la evaluación.
2. **Felicia:** Consensuar resultados de todos los socios en cada eje de trabajo.
3. **Félix:** Conocer de forma general los cuellos de botella en los 5 años.
4. **Alexis:** Opinión de AID con respecto a los resultados del proyecto y los retos.
5. **Janira:** Definir puntos débiles.
6. **Daysi:** Como se va a trabajar, la información que va a requerir el equipo. Conocer el cronograma de trabajo.
7. **Anier:** Conocer la metodología.
8. **Santos:** Salir con claridad, tipo de información de los socios para satisfacer los requerimientos del equipo de evaluación. Así como conocer el punto de vista de los productores, beneficiarios y aliados, sus impresiones son muy importantes.



**René,** procede a la presentación de los objetivos del taller, objetivos de la evaluación y metodología de la evaluación.

**Félix:** ¿Cuáles son las herramientas iniciales que están utilizando? ¿Como información primaria, cuál es la herramienta?

#### **LINEA DE TIEMPO**

**Actividad: Lluvia de Ideas sobre los Hitos y Contexto del proyecto ACORDAR.**

#### **HITOS EN EL AÑO 2007**

- Enfoque de cadenas de valor para enfrentar crisis del café.
- Integración del Consorcio ACORDAR.
- Compromisos de Alcaldes para apoyo a cadenas de valor. (Juan Alberto Molina).
- RAMAC inicio la firma de convenio con la Cooperativa Tomatoya donde fue un primer paso para abrir una forma de negociación y AG (Gerardo Thomas).
- Introducción sistemas de riego. Se introducen nuevas tecnologías.

- La adopción de tecnologías (permitió el cumplimiento de los objetivos del proyecto).

### **FACTORES DEL CONTEXTO AÑO 2007**

- Elecciones Municipales.

### **HITOS EN EL AÑO 2008**

- Conformación de comisiones técnicas por cadenas de valor.
- Encuentro con 25 Alcaldes, alianzas y compromisos.
- Escuelas de Campo.
- Cooperativa/Sector privado/Sector público.
- Transferencia de conocimientos.
- Construcción del primer borrador de políticas de Género: expresión de voluntad institucional, articulación de esfuerzos organizacionales, validación de experiencias. (Ligia Corrales)
- Construcción centro de acopio y ayuda para consolidar alianzas con la colonia.
- Construcción de alianzas con el sector público-privado: crédito, insumos, servicios, mercado. (Juan Alberto Molina).
- Introducción de tecnologías productivas.
- Intercambio de experiencia y capacitación (2008-2009)
- Financiamiento en su debido tiempo e innovación tecnológica. (2008-2009).
- Propuesta y aprobación de ordenanzas municipales (2008-2012) (Ronald Flores)



### **FACTORES DEL CONTEXTO AÑO 2008**

- Movimiento No-pago. (Daysi Medrano)
- Precios y demanda de cacao incrementados.

### **HITOS AÑO 2009**

- Profundización de las relaciones pública-privada (principalmente con gobierno local).
- Construcción de infraestructura para agregar valor. (Juan Alberto Molina).
- Construcción del Centro Agroindustrial de Frijol CECOOPSEMEIN (Félix Miranda).
- Alianzas sector público-privado ayudaron al desarrollo de las actividades del proyecto (DURANTE TODO EL PROYECTO) (Elizabeth Moran).
- Comisiones de gobernabilidad en cadenas de valor.
- Identificación de los y las productoras como sujeto de derechos con capacidad de incidir. Se crearon relaciones entre productores(as) y gobierno local. (Felicia Lanuza).



- Alianza para promover espacios de participación. Promover la concertación de las inversiones. Fortalecer las estructuras organizacionales comunitarias. (2009-2011)

### **FACTORES DEL CONTEXTO AÑO 2009- 2010**

- Caída de precios internacional de tubérculos y raíces (malanga).

### **HITOS AÑO 2010**

- Implementación y fortalecimiento de las comisiones y política de Género del proyecto. (Ligia Corrales)
- Fondo de innovación y aprendizaje.
- Divulgación política de género, permitió a organizaciones crear sus políticas de género. (Elizabeth Moran)
- Cambio de objetivos estratégicos de ACORDAR.
- Graduación de Empresas. (Daysi Medrano)
- Enfoque de desarrollo empresarial a nivel de cooperativas. (Janira Centeno)
- Donación bomba de agua para mini acueductos, carreta que rueda. (Juan Ramón García)
- Se realizó convenio entre las cooperativas de frijol Jorge Salazar, APODER, CONSENFRI y CECOSEMAN.
- Construcción de dos plantas (frijol y productos frescos) (Karla Calderón)
- Diagnósticos a las empresas cooperativas.
- Creación del área municipalismo en cada organización socia.
- Aprobación de la II Fase del proyecto ACORDAR. (Daysi Medrano)

### **FACTORES DEL CONTEXTO 2010**

- Ley de CAPS / agua.
- Fomento de cultivo frijol. Bajando precios.
- Nueva estructura de los CPC
- Sequía afecta el rendimiento y el ingreso.
- Incremento del precio del café.
- Importación de Cebollas (2010-2011)

### **HITOS AÑO 2011**

- Fondo de innovación. Aprobación de propuestas innovadoras de negocio.
- Proyecto de innovación de mecanización.
- Legalización de los Cays en los municipios. Resolver problemáticas de agua en las comunidades. (Felicía Lanuza).
- Fortalecimiento de empresas cooperativas.
- Autoevaluación-capacitación-planificación. (Juan Alberto Molina).
- Convenios con Universidades UNI –UNA.
- Apoyo a procesos de investigación en áreas de interés para las organizaciones socias.
- Firmas de convenio para la siembra de frijol negro cooperativa Wiscoya. (APODER 2011-2012).

### **FACTORES DEL CONTEXTO AÑO 2011**

- Exceso de humedad. (Félix Miranda).
- Mercado salvadoreño, se da pérdida en el frijol.

- Introducción de plaga (paratuberculosis)-
- Política de Plan semillas. (2011-2012)

**HITOS AÑO 2012**

- Plan de certificación de fincas en BPA, ACORDAR- Ministerio Agropecuario y Forestal (MAGFOR). Certificación a 21 productores. (Abraham Mercado).
- Evaluación de Cooperativa ADA/Indicadores del proyecto. Graduación empresas cooperativas. (Daisy Medrano).
- Documentación de CMS (cambios más significativos). Sistematización. (Juan Alberto Molina).
- Borrador de la Política de Genero, 16 políticas en cooperativas (APODER, asistido por CARITAS) (Elizabeth Moran).
- 1ra Certificación de BPA y mercado justo para pequeños productores. (Félix Miranda).

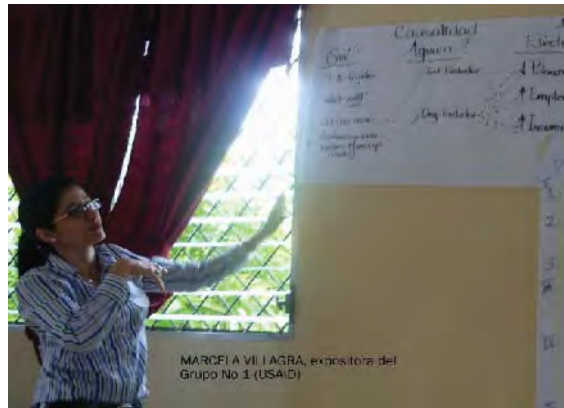
**FACTORES DEL CONTEXTO TRANSVERSALES DEL AÑO 2007 AL 2012**

- Fenómenos naturales-
- Limitación de fondos financieros.
- Alza combustible. Alza costos de producción.
- Aspectos socioculturales.
- Acceso a nuevos mercados-

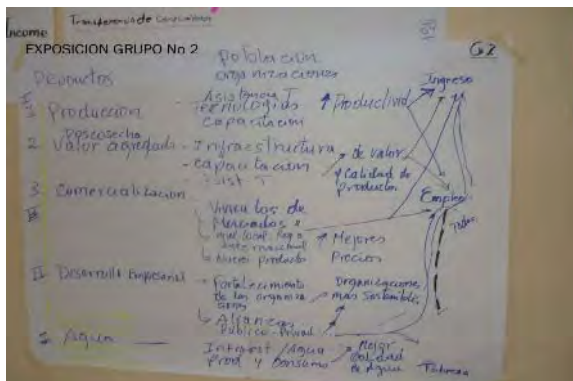
**RECONSTRUCCION DE LA TEORIA DE CAMBIO EFECTIVA DE ACORDAR**

**GRAFICO DE CAUSALIDAD.**

**Grupo No 1. USAID**  
(Expone Marcela Villagra.)

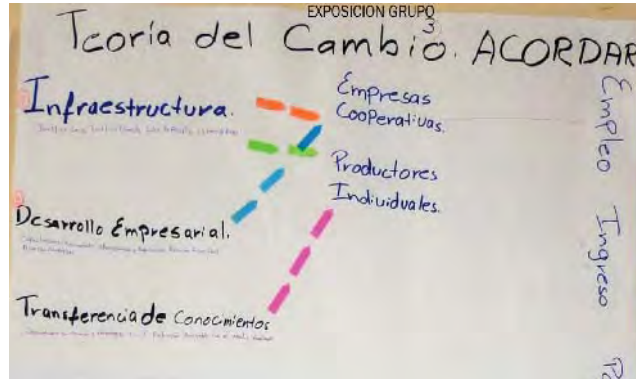


MARCELA VILLAGRA, expositora del Grupo No 1 (USAID)



**GRUPO No 2. ACORDAR**  
(Expone Juan Alberto Molina)

**GRUPO No 3. LWR, TNS, AG**  
(Expone Alexis Herrera)



Los productos que identificamos como fuertes son:

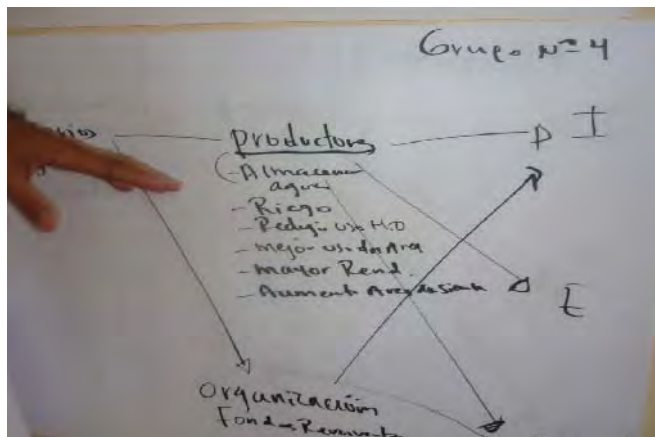
1. La producción. Pos-cosecha y comercialización.
2. Post-cosecha, Valor agregado.
3. Comercialización.
4. Desarrollo Empresarial.
5. Agua

- En el tema de producción, muy fuerte componente en asistencia técnica, en tecnología para sistema de riego, beneficios húmedos, etc., capacitación, insumos (tiene que ver el componentes de semilla). Con este esfuerzo que hicimos lo que tenemos es un aumento en la productividad. Este aumento ya no es teórico, porque por ejemplo, en hortalizas estamos en un 35%. Al aumentar la productividad, obviamente tenemos más fuente de ingreso de los productores.
- Algo que se me olvidaba, es que la población y los productores lo estamos viendo muy ligados con las cooperativas. Los productores están vinculados a la organización.
- En el valor agregado, está la construcción de infraestructura de pos cosecha, también hay procesos de capacitación para mejorar la calidad del producto, y hay asistencia técnica para dar seguimiento a los estándares de calidad de la producción. Esto nos da un incremento de valor agregado y calidad de producto, que inciden de inmediato en ingreso, en fuente de empleo (esta planta genera más de 100 empleos para mujeres) y hay un efecto directo para la reducción de la pobreza.
- En el aspecto de la comercialización: tenemos vínculos de mercados a nivel nacional, regional e internacional. Y también nuevos productos, tenemos un componente de vegetales chinos, producción de cacao, todo este esfuerzo nos está llevando a mejores precios que inciden en el ingreso. Además, el mismo mercado genera otros empleos, para los transportistas, los de aduanas que son empleos indirectos.
- Tenemos la parte de desarrollo empresarial, y uno de los aspectos fuertes es el fortalecimiento de las organizaciones. Y la construcción de alianzas publicas-privadas, tales como el MAGFOR, INTA, IDR, alcaldías. De este fortalecimiento con las organizaciones, tenemos ya, 32 organizaciones con unos planes de autosuficiencia para buscar su sostenibilidad. Algunas ya están pagando parte de su personal, pero tienen un plan para dar mejor servicio a sus asociados.
- Las alianzas público-privada también ayudan a la sostenibilidad de las organizaciones, y que mantengan las relaciones una vez que finalice el proyecto, pero también a través de las alianzas tenemos 20 millones de dólares de aporte al proyecto, que han ido para construcción de caminos, y que también de una u otra manera genera más ingresos.

- En la parte de Agua, tenemos infraestructura de agua para la producción y consumo, fue más de 2 millones de dólares lo que se invirtieron para esto, y lo que tenemos es mejor calidad de agua, para el proceso de pos cosecha, para proceso de producción y el consumo. Esto es un factor ligado directamente a la reducción de la pobreza porque estamos dando acceso a un recurso de mejor calidad para mayor salud de la gente.
- El enfoque principal de ACORDAR son Cadenas de valor, como la sombrilla grande, pero como un segundo componente, el enfoque de ACORDAR, está en las alianzas. La construcción de alianzas es lo más fuerte, nosotros decimos esto es lo que ha movido al proyecto, porque hay como 142 alianzas publico-privadas y más de 120 alianzas en el sentido financiero y no-financiero.
- También otro enfoque de trabajo es el de género. Identificamos que se ha dado un aumento de crecimiento en la participación de las mujeres en cargos directivos, en entidades productivas.
- Otro enfoque de trabajo de Municipalismo. El municipalismo como la plataforma para crear esas capacidades en las cooperativas para que ellos puedan participar en cadenas municipales y dar seguimiento a sus demandas.
- El enfoque fuerte, es la parte de innovación, casi 400 mil dólares es el fondo de innovación para ir desarrollando nuevas alternativas. También tenemos otro aspecto que es el medio ambiente, hemos estado con esa política de producir productos sanos. Los resultados son muy buenos y casi el 45% de nuestra producción es orgánica. También otro enfoque de trabajo es la parte de aprendizaje, desde que nació el proyecto nos hemos mantenido como consorcio cada tres meses unidos todos y tratando de identificar nuevos aprendizajes, y compartiendo entre todos.

**GRUPO No 4/ Socios CRS: CARITAS-Estelí, CECOSEM MAC, CECOOPSEMEIN, ASDENIC, FEM ADDAC (Expone Roger Solórzano)**

- El beneficio es el sistema de riego por goteo. Ese beneficio se le entrego al productor, el cual con esto reduce costos en cuanto a la mano de obra, hace mayores aplicaciones de fertilizantes y productos químicos. Por ende esta también generando empleos al hacer la instalación de este sistema. Recibe ingresos, porque mejora la calidad productiva. Si hay ingreso, entonces se reduce la pobreza del productor. Como afecta la organización? El producto llega a la organización (en este caso la cooperativa), la cooperativa lo da al productor como un fondo evolvente, entonces al volverse fondo evolvente se capitaliza la organización, la cooperativa y por ende disminuye su pobreza.
- Reservoirio de agua: es un componente que se le entrego al productor para almacenar agua, lo utiliza para regar, reduce la mano de obra al momento de estar regando, mayor desarrollo del cultivo, mayores

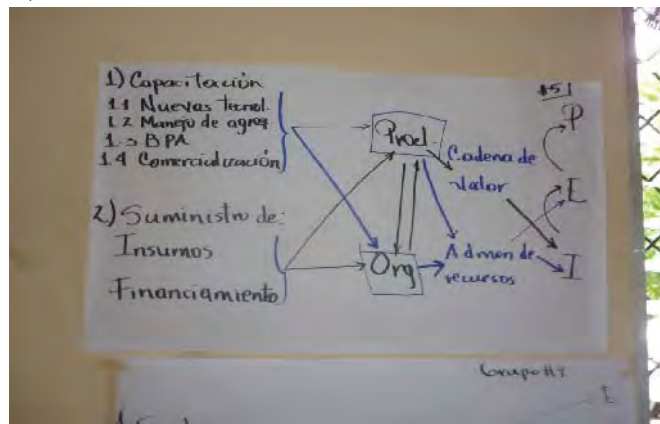


rendimientos, aumenta las áreas de siembra. Lo mismo pasa con la organización, la cual recibió esto, se le entrego al productor en forma de fondo revolvente, por lo que el producto le genero ingreso y redujo la pobreza.

- Los centros de acopio, es lo mismo.
- Uno de mayor importancia fue el valor agregado que se dio en el caso de los vegetales, granos básicos, hortalizas, el productor recibió otro beneficio como valor agregado, tal es el caso en los centros de acopio que se le da en el caso del frijol, en los centros de acopio de los beneficios húmedos, los centros de acopio de empaque de hortalizas, le produjo al productor más generación de ingresos, más empleo y reducción de la pobreza. Lo mismo la organización porque esta es la que está dándole al productor en forma de fondo revolvente.

**GRUPO 5/Otros GM, oferente, Asociaciones, Empresa privada, MAGFOR: (Expone José Abraham Mercado)**

Nosotros tuvimos Alcaldía, MAGFOR y RAMAC. Conceptualizamos dos aspectos en este proceso: asumimos que el grupo de productores organizados en cooperativas y productores individuales como proceso. Conceptualizamos aspectos de capacitación, tanto entidades oficiales como entidades privadas, se encargan de implementar capacitaciones



en varios componentes, además tecnología en uso de agroquímicos, tecnología en producción y aspectos relacionados con la comercialización. Esta parte en conjunto tiene dos entradas, tanto para cooperativas como para productor, pero al mismo tiempo estamos considerando que golpea directamente a la administración de recursos en ambos sentidos. Esto va a ir directamente a la generación de mayor ingresos y consecutivamente a generar mayor empleo y disminuir la pobreza.

La otra parte corresponde a los suministros. Generalmente hay una relación comercial con cooperativas y productores, donde se hace la entrega de insumos y financiamiento, dándose una relación porcentual, esto golpeada directamente la parte que tiene que ver, con la CValor, y golpea fundamentalmente la parte de los ingresos. Que es lo importante en lo de la CValor? Generalmente, aquí en Nicaragua, el intermediario es el que se lleva la mejor parte, es penoso que muchos productores pongan sus mayores esfuerzos y les pidan el 30% o 40% de su trabajo. Aquí con el incremento de su trabajo le queda al productor, buena parte está generando ese ingreso y entonces hacemos una relación cíclica hacia los 3 factores que están definidos. Otro aspecto importante es la relación mutua que hay entre la cooperativa y el productor, entradas y salidas en ambos sentidos, en ambas partes.

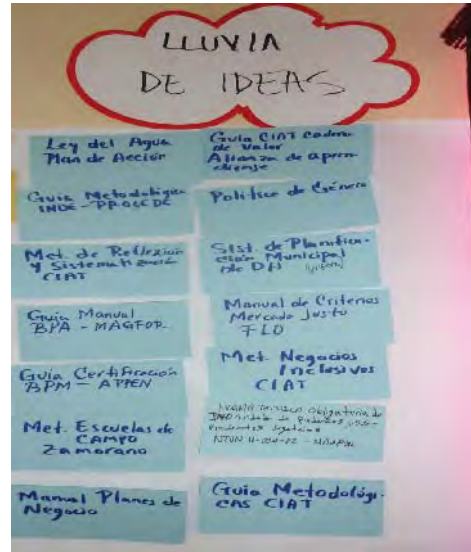
**René** cierra la dinámica con la siguiente pregunta: Si preguntáramos que fue lo que se planteo inicialmente en ACORDAR que era?



**Juan Alberto:** Considero que desde la II fase ha sido el desarrollo empresarial. Pero desde que inicio hemos mantenido el enfoque de producción, pos cosecha, comercialización y desarrollo empresarial. Solo género en la I Fase juega como una consultoría para políticas y en la II fase para implementación. Nuestras metas están ligadas de la I a II fase.

**René:** Cual es la teoría de cambio efectiva que se ha implementado? Fue respondida por 5 grupos diferente. Que nos dice esta evidencia. Hay una única teoría de cambio? Hay una única historia contada?

**Daisy:** Cada organización tiene sus diferentes métodos. **“Diferentes maneras de llegar al efecto”**.



**René:** Esta evidencia nos permite sustanciar en el momento que en la práctica y por actor se genera diferentes teorías de cambio, porque no hubo un único lenguaje exactamente común entre las partes. Un reto para nosotros como evaluadores es saber qué aspectos vamos a evaluar, que aspectos queremos medir.

### DINAMICA: LLUVIA DE IDEAS

- Ley del Agua. Plan de Acción.
- Guía Metodológica. INDE-PROSEDE
- Metodología de reflexión y sistematización (CIAT)
- Guía Manual. Buenas prácticas agrícolas(BPA)-MAGFOR
- Guía Certificación. BPM-APPEN
- Met. Escuelas de Campo Zamorano
- Manual planes de negocio
- Guía CIAT de cadena de valor
- Alianza de aprendizaje
- Política de género
- Sist. de planificación municipal de DH (INIFOM)
- Manual de criterios mercado justo. FLO
- Guía metodológicas CIAT
- Met. Negocios inclusivos (CIAT)
- Norma técnica obligatoria de inocuidad de productos y subproductos vegetales.(NTON 11-004-02-MAGFOR)

### DINAMICA: LECCIONES APRENDIDAS

Si, ACORDAR iniciara nuevamente

## **RESPUESTAS A LA PRIMERA PREGUNTA: QUE COSAS HARÍA DE LA MISMA MANERA? EXPLIQUE POR QUÉ?**

**Juan Alberto:** Asociatividad: Trabajo en consorcio, alianzas con sector público-privado.

**Roger:** Formalizar las alianzas con gobiernos municipales con enfoque de asociatividad de CValor.

**Félix:** Promover el sistema de riego.

**Mizael:** Implementación de procedimientos de fondos de apalancamiento. Promover espacios de acercamiento del gobierno municipal y el sector de productores. Nuestro municipio ha sido bastante fría esta relación.

Promover acercamiento y espacios de participación del Gob. Local y productores.

Promover y facilitar la participación de hombres y mujeres, así como su acceso a recursos (técnicos, económicos, de capacitación, etc.).

**Erick:** Buscaría formar alianzas estratégicas para que los programas que oferto tengan un buen impacto, acompañado de las bases técnicas en las organizaciones fortalecidas.

**Arnie:** Enfoque de desarrollo empresarial, seguimiento en cuanto ha: contabilidad, desarrollo, fortalecimiento, admón., y organizaciones, para permitir fortalecer la constitución de las organizaciones y cooperativas

**Roger:** Fomentar y fortalecer las alianzas privadas y públicas para promover la sostenibilidad.

**Félix:** Trabajar en alianzas que benefician las actividades realizadas por los productores. Así como la implementación de tecnología que diversifique la producción.

**Felicia:** Establecer alianzas estratégicas con actores locales, para el empoderamiento de las organizaciones de base y contribuir a resolver problemáticas.

**Alexis:** Enfoque de cadena de valor con las cooperativas y los productores, porque permite visualizar las fortalezas y debilidades a lo largo de la implementación del proyecto. Y otra cosa es con respecto a las alianzas alianzas estratégicas, que permiten generar impacto de los resultados esperados.

**Abraham:** Elaboración de plan de certificación de fincas en BPA con pequeños productores entre el proyecto ACORDAR-MAGFOR, ya que de esta manera se logro con éxito el logro de un 70% de l plan. Esto incluye: i) capacitación, ii) acompañamiento, iii) diagnóstico, iv) recomendaciones, v) interacción con las partes involucradas entre funcionarios, técnicos y productores ACORDAR-MAGFOR. Certificación de BPA.

**Elizabeth:** Establecer alianzas con instituciones de apoyo para que brinden servicios. Por ej; salud. Porque se une esfuerzos, experiencias, recursos para mejorar la calidad de vida de las personas. Ayudan a complementar y a desarrollar las tecnologías. Establecer alianzas con funciones de apoyo que fortalezcan el enfoque de desarrollo personal y humano. Por eje, en el caso del área de género tienen un determinado objetivos, lineamiento, y dentro de ellos, no había ni presupuesto, ni acciones directas para salud preventiva de las mujeres

**Daysi:** El desarrollo de escuelas de campo para transferir conocimiento y promover tecnologías, es más efectivo a menor costo.

**Janira:** Establecimiento de alianzas porque complementan las actividades.

**Ligia:** Trabajar con organizaciones, cooperativas constituidas que puedan dar seguimiento a las acciones del proyecto una vez finalizado. Porque, en nuestro caso, el trabajo está directamente con organizaciones cooperativas ya constituidas.

## RESPUESTAS A LA SEGUNDA PREGUNTA: ¿QUE COSAS HARÍA DE MANERA DIFERENTE? ¿EXPLIQUE POR QUE?

**Roger:** Cambiaría el área de actividades de municipalismo de los PODA de cada socio. Esto inicialmente se miraba aparte. Territorializar el enfoque de impacto de cadenas. La cadena es de forma general porque no hay un impacto zonificado. La asociatividad de los municipios relacionados a las cadenas de valor.

**Elizabeth:** Incluir desde el inicio del proyecto, temas estratégicos como municipalismo y género, pero con su presupuesto, ya que quedan actividades sin desarrollar.

**Ligia:** Formular un proyecto desde el inicio con enfoque de género y con su presupuesto. Porque... este tema no se parió desde el inicio, porque si no es tratar de ir repellando, y en consecuencia también el sistema de monitoreo. Si un proyecto lo planificamos, que sea con indicadores cualitativos explícitos que se puedan medir al final. Esto tiene que ver con la planificación y el sistema de monitoreo.

**Alexis:** Sistema de planificación más consensuada entre el consorcio. Porque... el sistema de planificación, bien funciono todo lo que son las valoraciones trimestrales, pero a veces no había consenso dentro del consorcio, entonces había mucho cruce de actividades. Por la diversidad de actividades y zonas del proyecto. A veces teníamos que andar la misma persona dividida en dos cosas, así como estamos hoy la cosa.

Ampliar el fondo de innovación. Porque...El fondo de innovación fue muy pequeño, para un montón de gente. Fueron mínimas las cooperativas que pudieron presentar sus propuestas. Darle más oportunidad a otras organizaciones que tenían buenas propuestas para ampliar el fondo.

**Mizael:** Incluir el área de actividades de municipalismo en los POA de cada socio. Territorializar los en focos e impactos de CV. Asociatividad de los municipios relacionado con CV. Porque...es importante que la municipalidad establezca esa alianza, haya un mayor involucramiento de la municipalidad en el desarrollo del proyecto, estar más al tanto de las actividades que se están desarrollando en un municipio como en los otros sectores. Fomentar en los productores la cultura de pago de los impuestos en los productores. Tratar de concientizarlos y motivarlos. Muchas veces en el municipio nuestro los productores son los que menos tienen voluntad de pago.

**Ronald:** En ese caso hay una experiencia de las cooperativas CATEDARGO como parte de crédito, se les exigió a los productores la solvencia fiscal, siendo beneficiados del proyecto.

**Erick:** Fomentaría que las organizaciones se sintieran muy comprometidas y le tomaran aprecio al proyecto. Es decir que hubiera apropiación por parte de las organizaciones. Apoyaría que tengan un mercado justo de sus productos. Para que... mis productos tengan más ofertas.

**Félix:** Nosotros cambiaríamos el reducir el número de beneficiarios por proyecto. Para que... sea proporcional a la cantidad de técnicos, y así facilitar y hacer más eficiente la capacitación y seguimientos, y dar calidad en la atención.

**Karla:** Trabajar el tema del fondo de innovación desde el inicio del proyecto. Para que... sea más funcional.

**Janira:** La graduación de empresas debió ser trabajada desde el inicio y no en una II fase por el tiempo, y debió ser de manera estratificada.

**Daysi:** Las alianzas deben partir de unir a las empresas cooperativas. Para... tener un mayor impacto en el sector (incidencia en normativas). Hay muchas alianzas con el sector público, con el sector privado, pero alianzas entre las organizaciones, no las estrecharon. Se pudo hacer esfuerzos en unir las. Aun cuando se formaron comisiones

técnicas, debimos de haber fortalecido más las comisiones de gobernabilidad que son en las que ya, están todas las cooperativas trabajando. La cantidad de compromisos que tenemos como ACORDAR, saturábamos a los productores. Muchos productores no entraron a las comisiones de gobernabilidad, porque era una cantidad de intervenciones; municipalismo, género, parte productiva, sin decir lo que se hizo en estos últimos 2 años que fue una presión enorme en la parte de desarrollo empresarial. En caso nuestro la concentración geográfica estábamos muy dispersos y la diversidad de rubros también.

**Juan Alberto:** Yo plantearía, cambiar el sistema de monitoreo y evaluación. Porque comprendo el gran trabajo que se ha hecho por recuperar información, es un trabajo muy pesado, pero es nuestra tabla de salvación en este momento por la cantidad de información. Enfocar el monitoreo hacia la promotora. Para que por ejemplo un técnico pueda tener el enlace con 20 promotores, y los 20 promotores hagan enlace con 10 productores cada uno.

Implementaría un sistema de información en línea. De manera que andemos con un Ipad, en un celular metiendo la información, los promotores la pasan al técnico, y el técnico la mete rápido en una lista y eso nos permitiría compartir información en nube electrónica, de forma rápida.

Con este cambio cambiaría la línea de base que fuera el 100% de productores. En el mismo tiempo que entre el productor, entre su ficha de asociación y se levanten los datos claves. Y con una geo-referenciación, para saber la ubicación. Profundizar más hacia el desarrollo empresarial para mayor sostenibilidad.

**Abraham:** Hubiese sido importante la elaboración de un plan de certificación a partir del 3er año del proyecto. Porque... de esa manera en el 5to año hubiera generado mayor cantidad de productores certificados en BPA, porque desgraciadamente hasta en el último año se logro concretar un plan de trabajo agresivo.

Otro aspecto importante es que hemos percibido en el pequeño grupo de productores compromisos sociales hacia la producción de frutas y vegetales con calidad y con inocuidad. A pesar que el mercado no se lo está exigiendo, pero ellos están teniendo un compromiso social, de facilitar a la población ese tipo de producto. Que hoy por hoy, apenas son 21 los que lo están generando. Y esto va acompañado de cambio de prácticas de cultivo y actitudes de responsabilidad del productor al producir un producto inocuo, y esto me va a conllevar a tener mejores nichos preferenciales en el mercado. Otro aspecto importante es integrar el componente BPA como parte de los requisitos de trabajo del proyecto hacia los productores, porque es importante que el productor vaya cambiando la percepción hacia producción de alimentos inocuos. Hoy por hoy, el mercado interno, a nosotros como Ministerio (MAGFOR) nos está poniendo muchas trabas para la comercialización, por eso muchas empresas que tienen grandes recursos ya están haciendo sus cambios y modificaciones, por ello es importante que desde ya, los pequeños productores vayamos trabajando en ese sentido para ir cambiando la percepción hacia alimentos inocuos.

**Ronald:** El sistema de evaluación y monitoreo debería ser más abierto, porque está muy concentrado. Por ejemplo, no se contabilizó las capacitaciones a personas no-socias. En este monitoreo debería de capacitarse a las cooperativas en análisis financiero, porque se ha perdido bastante información importantísima, no hay interrelación de indicadores financieros que te permitan mejorar.



Hasta donde el proyecto ACORDAR ha mejorado la reducción de pobreza, no lo tenés, y es constante. Tenés 7000 familias en código. Considero que el análisis ha sido muy corto.

Así como hay diferentes necesidades de fortalecimiento en empresas cooperativas pequeñas, medianas y grandes- Se debería dar una graduación en la parte organizacional por niveles de empresas asociativas.

### **SUGERENCIAS:**

**Juan Alberto:** plantea la sugerencia que en la evaluación sería bueno ir más allá del ingreso.

**Ronald:** Evaluar el cambio de actitud del productor para valorar la sostenibilidad.



**Annex 2**

**Matrix: Evaluation Questions and Data Collection` Methods**

|                     | Questions  | Type of Questions | Type of information needed                                   | Unit of analysis   | Data Collection Method (s) |            |             |            |   |  |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|--|--|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|--|
|                     |  |                   |  |  | Survey                     | Interviews | Focus Group | Case study | Accessing to the other applied research methods` findings | Requesting documentation from USAID, CRS, partners; municipal offices, and cooperatives; |
| <b>1. Evaluate:</b> |  |                   |  |  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| a.                  | Evaluate the programs overall technical approach and how effective it has been in addressing stated problems and in reaching its objectives and expected results                           | Normative         | Documental: qualitative and quantitative. Primary            | Overall technical approach (effective theory of change); stated problems global; targets |                            | X          | X           |            | X   | X  |
| b.                  | Evaluate the long-term sustainability of USAID investments made in infrastructure, capacity building, public-private partnerships, improved marketing and buyer relations, and other areas | Normative         | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative | Infrastructure Partnerships; Organization; Individual producers                          | X                          | X          | X           |            | X   | X  |
| c.                  | Evaluate the selection of direct beneficiaries of the program, including their general profile, income, demographics, etc.   | Normative         | Documental   | CRS, Implementing organizations  | X                          |            |             |            | X   | X  |
| c.1.                | Was the selection of beneficiaries conducive to overall poverty reduction and income and employment creation?  | Descriptive       | Documental   | CRS, Implementing organizations  |                            | X          |             |            |   | X  |
| c.2.                | Assess whether it would be more practical to reduce or increase the number of direct   | Normative         |  |  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |



|      | Questions   | Type of Questions | Type of information needed                                   | Unit of analysis                               | Data Collection Method (s) |            |             |            |   |  |
|------|---|-------------------|--|--|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|--|
|      |   |                   |  |  | Survey                     | Interviews | Focus Group | Case study | Accessing to the other applied research methods' findings | Requesting documentation from USAID, CRS, partners; municipal offices, and cooperatives; |
|      | beneficiaries?  |                   |  |  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| c.3. | What types of interventions would be more appropriate under a scenario with a smaller and with a larger number of beneficiaries?  | Normative         |  |  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| c.4. | Had program beneficiaries been recipients of assistance under previous CRS programs?  | Descriptive       | Documental   | CRS  |                            |            |             |            |   | X  |
| d.   | Evaluate the program's leverage funding and cost-sharing components?  | Descriptive       |  |  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| d.1. | What has been the impact of leveraged resources in the overall programs effectiveness?  | Descriptive       | Documental   | Type of resources leveraged<br>Type of partner |                            | X          |             |            |   | X  |
| d.2. | What future changes would you make in terms of leverage funding requirements?   | Normative         | Documental   | Type of resources leveraged                    | N/A                        |            |             |            |   |  |
| e.   | Evaluate the cooperative organization approach that presumably allows for reaching a larger number of producers through more coordinated interventions, including technical assistance, revolving credit lines, small-scale and large-scale infrastructure. | Normative         | Documental quantitative and qualitative; primary qualitative | Cooperative organization approach              |                            | X          |             | X          |   | X  |
| e.1. | How effective has this model been in helping producers better market their crops and  | Normative         | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary             | Cooperative model as stated in the ACORDAR     |                            | X          |             | X          |   | X  |



|           | Questions   | Type of Questions | Type of information needed                                    | Unit of analysis                                     | Data Collection Method (s) |            |             |            |   |  |
|-----------|---|-------------------|---|--|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|--|
|           |   |                   |   |  | Survey                     | Interviews | Focus Group | Case study | Accessing to the other applied research methods' findings | Requesting documentation from USAID, CRS, partners; municipal offices, and cooperatives; |
|           | better source their inputs?   |                   | qualitative   | TOC  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| e.2.      | Is the cooperative model in Nicaragua an effective platform for advancing the interests of small farmers?   | Normative         | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative  | Cooperative model as stated in the ACORDAR TOC       |                            | X          |             | X          |   | X  |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Evaluate the effectiveness of the program in:</b>  |                   |   |  |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| a.1       | reducing poverty and food insecurity in the focus regions, taking into consideration factors such as the income effects on direct beneficiaries, the types of direct beneficiaries (income levels), and the potential secondary or multiplier effects on the rest of the population in the regions. | Normative         | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary quantitative | Municipal; beneficiary producers type; effects types | X                          |            | X           |            |   | X  |
| a.2       | How significant were secondary or multiplier effects on income and employment considering the types of interventions and the design of this program?  | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative;                      | Type of intervention; TOC                            |                            | X          |             |            |   | X  |
| b.        | facilitating transactions and creating backward linkages between end-markets, processors, and small-holder and low-income producers   | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative; Primary qualitative  | Value chain  |                            | X          | X           | X          |   |  |
| c.1       | Developing and better integrating the focus value chains in a way that they become more competitive and   | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative; Primary              | Value chain  |                            | X          | X           | X          |   |  |





|           | Questions  | Type of Questions | Type of information needed  | Unit of analysis                     | Data Collection Method (s) |            |             |            |   |  |
|-----------|--|-------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|--|
|           |  |                   |   |                                      | Survey                     | Interviews | Focus Group | Case study | Accessing to the other applied research methods' findings | Requesting documentation from USAID, CRS, partners; municipal offices, and cooperatives; |
|           | benefit as many people as possible through income and employment generation.   |                   | qualitative   |                                      |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| c.2       | Comment on the selection of specific value chains.   | N/A               | N/A   | N/A                                  | N/A                        |            |             |            |   |  |
| c.3       | Should the inclusion of any other value chain products have been considered?   | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative;                                      | TOC; value chain selection criteria; |                            | X          |             |            |   |  |
| <b>3.</b> | Identify those specific program interventions that have been more successful and/or had a greater impact on beneficiaries. Explain why.  | Normative         | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative and quantitative | Type of intervention; TOC            |                            | X          | X           | X          |   | X  |
| <b>4.</b> | Review and evaluate progress toward meeting the programs objectives and indicator targets – provide recommendations regarding the programs M&E system, including the data collection processes, the methodology for construction of indicator variables, the indicator selection and how well indicators capture the program's effectiveness in meeting its objectives and expected results. | Normative         | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative                  | ACORDAR M&E system                   |                            | X          |             |            |   | X  |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>Analyze</b>   |                   |   |                                      |                            |            |             |            |   |  |
| a.        | The advantages and disadvantages of the program's geographical focus.  | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary                              | Geographical focus; TOC              |                            | X          |             |            |   | X  |



|    | Questions   | Type of Questions | Type of information needed  | Unit of analysis   | Data Collection Method (s)       |            |             |            |   |  |
|----|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|--|
|    |   |                   |   |                    | Survey                           | Interviews | Focus Group | Case study | Accessing to the other applied research methods' findings | Requesting documentation from USAID, CRS, partners; municipal offices, and cooperatives; |
|    | <p>What was the effect of having the program spread out over such a large area?</p> <p>Would it be advisable or practical to narrow the geographical focus?</p> <p>Explain why or why not?</p>  |                   | qualitative   |                    |                                  |            |             |            |   |  |
| b. | <p>Overall lessons learned and provide recommendations for a future activity regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= the program's overall approach,</li> <li>= types of interventions,</li> <li>= types of beneficiaries,</li> <li>= value chain selection,</li> <li>= private-public partnerships,</li> <li>= and other aspects related to the design and implementation of the program.</li> </ul> | N/A               | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative and quantitative | ACORDAR's TOC      | Use of main evaluation findings. |            |             |            |   |  |
|    | <b>Gender Questions</b>   |                   |   |                    |                                  |            |             |            |   |  |
| a. | <p>How did the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household (for example, roles in decision-making and different access to and control over resources and services) affected the work undertaken?</p>   | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative                  | Intervention types | X                                | X          | X           |            |   | X  |



|    | Questions  | Type of Questions | Type of information needed  | Unit of analysis                     | Data Collection Method (s) |            |             |            |   |  |
|----|--|-------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---|--|
|    |  |                   |   |                                      | Survey                     | Interviews | Focus Group | Case study | Accessing to the other applied research methods' findings | Requesting documentation from USAID, CRS, partners; municipal offices, and cooperatives; |
| b. | How did the anticipated results of the work affected women and men differently?  | Descriptive       | Documental qualitative and quantitative; primary qualitative and quantitative | Women and men producer beneficiaries | X                          |            | X           |            |   | X  |
| 6. | Provide insight as to how USAID can be a "thought leader" in order to enhance dialogue with other USAID and interagency partners, other donors and the private sector in order to be a catalyst for positive change in the area of economic development in the north central region.<br><br>Comment on how USAID's coordination role, expertise in creating public-private partnerships, ability to employ science and technology, and mobilizing community support can enhance stakeholder impact while minimizing the cost to USAID. | N/A               | Documental qualitative; primary qualitative                                   | USAID's Nicaragua country strategy   |                            | X          |             |            |   | X<br>review of other relevant agency country strategies;                                 |



**Annex 3**  
**Matrix: Evaluation Questions Hypothesis**

| Cod       | Evaluation Questions   | Hypothesis  | Indicators  |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Evaluate</b>  |   |   |
| <b>a.</b> | Evaluate the programs overall technical approach and how effective it has been in addressing stated problems and in reaching its objectives and expected results   | The overall technical approach: (i) has been logic, plausible and feasible; (ii) has focused on the stated problems; and (iii) has been effective in a differentiated manner for their characteristically diverse target populations/beneficiaries, given their specific local circumstances in the selected municipalities and particular value chains. There was a basic common understanding among partners on the overall technical approach.   | Degree of internal consistency, relevance and coherence with theoretical underpinnings. Degree of achievement of own objectives and results (LogFrame indicators).  |
| <b>b.</b> | Evaluate the long-term sustainability of USAID investments made in infrastructure, capacity building, public-private partnerships, improved marketing and buyer relations, and other areas   | In the cases where farmers and their organizations have acquired long-lasting productive, marketing and organizational skills and developed real business relationships with other relevant chain actors, including strengthened local business service providers, investments are more likely to be sustainable.<br>In the cases where farmer organizations and cooperatives, other private sector actors including technical serviced providers and municipal governments are collaborating and jointly planning under a transparent environment to gear strategies and resources toward agricultural competitiveness, including where coop agribusinesses' public investment needs are incorporated into municipal development plans, investments are more likely to be sustainable. | No. of farmers and organizations which have made satisfactory business arrangements by their own with buyers and providers. No. of farmer organization and cooperatives satisfactorily participating in local public-private alliances which are supported by municipal governments.  |
| <b>c.</b> | Evaluate the selection of direct beneficiaries of the program, including their general profile, income, demographics, etc. Was the selection of beneficiaries conducive to overall poverty reduction and income and employment creation?<br>Assess whether it would be more practical to reduce or increase the number of direct beneficiaries? What types of interventions would be more appropriate under a scenario with a smaller and with a larger number of beneficiaries?<br>Had program beneficiaries been recipients of assistance under previous CRS programs? | Some of direct beneficiaries were auto-selected in so far as core consortium members and its partners have been working with many of these families and coop enterprises in previous projects and were already familiar with their capacities, growth potential, business goal and constraints within their political, societal and economic environments. Auto-selection may have facilitated the ACORDAR's farmers organization strategy of generating scale economies and forging more competitive and market-responsive coop enterprises.<br>Auto-selection may have more been conducive to income and employment creation than to poverty reduction.<br>A decreased number of direct beneficiaries would have been more practical.   | Number of direct beneficiaries according the type of mechanism utilized for it selection.<br>% of selected direct beneficiaries who were initially poor.<br>% of selected poor direct beneficiaries who reached above-poverty line income level.<br>Selection mechanism's effectiveness<br>Number of active and inactive beneficiaries over time. |



|           |  |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|--|
| d.        | Evaluate the program's leverage funding and cost-sharing components? What has been the impact of leveraged resources in the overall programs effectiveness? What future changes would you make in terms of leverage funding requirements?  | Funding was significantly leveraged as an effective result of ACORDAR's municipal government (win-win) alliance and private corporation investment mobilization strategies.<br>Leveraged funds allowed for a significant increase of:<br>- Coverage of direct individual producers and producer association beneficiaries.<br>- Coop enterprises' businesses   | Leveraged fund types/CRS partner<br># direct producers/leverage fund type<br># coop enterprises/leverage fund type<br>Coop enterp. business sales/leverage funding     |
| e.        | Evaluate the cooperative organization approach that presumably allows for reaching a larger number of producers through more coordinated interventions, including technical assistance, revolving credit lines, small-scale and large-scale infrastructure. How effective has this model been in helping producers better market their crops and better source their inputs? Is the cooperative model in Nicaragua an effective platform for advancing the interests of small farmers? | The cooperative organization approach has been effective in integrating large number of producers, based on a better organization of scale economies, into more competitive agribusinesses in actual and/or emerging markets.  | increase (%) of coop enterprises' membership.<br>increase (%) of coop enterprises' marketed volume.  |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Evaluate the effectiveness of the program in:</b>   |  |  |
| a.        | reducing poverty and food insecurity in the focus regions, taking into consideration factors such as the income effects on direct beneficiaries, the types of direct beneficiaries (income levels), and the potential secondary or multiplier effects on the rest of the population in the regions. How significant were secondary or multiplier effects on income and employment considering the types of interventions and the design of this program?                               | ACORDAR has been effective in contributing to food accessibility (via income effect) by the poor direct beneficiaries' rural families, especially in the extreme- and very-high poverty municipalities, and therefore to poverty reduction. Secondary income and employment effects were mostly generated by infrastructure-machinery and equipment investments in those municipalities where they were carried out. | % income increase of poor direct beneficiaries in extreme- and very-high poverty municipalities.<br>No. of secondary employment in the new infrastructure investments. |
| b.        | facilitating transactions and creating backward linkages between end-markets, processors, and small-holder and low-income producers  | ACORDAR has been effective in developing more certain value chains than others, having been relatively more successful when external factors were more conducive to positive results.  | Performance of ACORDAR's value chain development baseline indicators.  |



|    |  |   |  |
|----|--|---|--|
| C  | Developing and better integrating the focus value chains in a way that they become more competitive and benefit as many people as possible through income and employment generation. Comment on the selection of specific value chains. Should the inclusion of any other value chain products have been considered?   | The ACORDAR's effective value chain approach allowed for the identification of actors and issues along the focus value chains which contributed to their becoming more competitive in general; however, there were different income and employment impact upon beneficiaries among focus value chains.  | Comparative performance of ACORDAR's value chain development baseline indicators.  |
| 3. | Identify those specific program interventions that have been more successful and/or had a greater impact on beneficiaries. Explain why.  | No applicable for hypothesis making   | Intervention types: 1. Small- and large-scale infrastructure investments; 2. Technical assistance; 3. Revolving credit funds; 4. Capacity building activity; 5. Provision of equipment and machinery; 6. Studies; 7. Innovation Fund |
| 4. | Review and evaluate progress toward meeting the programs objectives and indicator targets – provide recommendations regarding the programs M&E system, including the data collection processes, the methodology for construction of indicator variables, the indicator selection and how well indicators capture the program's effectiveness in meeting its objectives and expected results. | The M&E system, process and databases cover a wide ranging set of indicators though monitoring has more systematically, exhaustively and rigorously focused on a relatively small number of ACORDAR's total individual and collective target populations. The M&E system and processes were geared towards the facilitation of learning among core consortium members and other partners. | Coherence between <i>ex ante</i> evaluation design, baseline study, M&E conceptual documents and effective monitoring indicators usage. Database coverage and structure  |
| 5. | <b>Analyze</b>   |   |  |
| a. | The advantages and disadvantages of the program's geographical focus. What was the effect of having the program spread out over such a large area? Would it be advisable or practical to narrow the geographical focus? Explain why or why not?  | The spreading of ACORDAR to wider areas (other than the core consortium members' traditional northern region) has left the farther and latecomer areas' target populations with much less results sustainability possibilities.   | Performance of sales generated by long-term businesses arrangement established by direct beneficiaries located in the farther and latecomer areas.   |
| b. | Overall lessons learned and provide recommendations for a future activity regarding:<br>= the program's overall approach,<br>= types of interventions,<br>= types of beneficiaries,<br>= value chain selection,<br>= private-public partnerships,  | No applicable for hypothesis making   | Non applicable   |



|    |  |  |   |
|----|--|--|---|
|    | = and other aspects related to the design and implementation of the program.   |  |   |
|    | <b>Gender Questions</b>  |  |   |
| a. | How did the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household (for example, roles in decision-making and different access to and control over resources and services) affected the work undertaken?   | Gender inequalities were directly and gradually addressed by ACORDAR thereby having controlled effects upon the achievement of the programme’s short-term and medium term results, especially during phase II.   | Performance of the ACORDAR’s Gender Strategy and Policy’s specific gender indicators as well as of relevant sex disaggregated indicators. What to measure |
| b. | How did the anticipated results of the work affected women and men differently?  | Gender issues were satisfactorily though lately mainstreamed into the design and operational processes and methodologies of ACORDAR implementation, including specific affirmative action activities.<br>Some women beneficiaries were properly empowered economically and institutionally though more still needs to done for impacting more widely on women´ assets and decreasing gender inequality and among ACORDAR’s direct beneficiaries as originally expected.  |   |
| 6. | Provide insight as to how USAID can be a “thought leader” in order to enhance dialogue with other USAID and interagency partners, other donors and the private sector in order to be a catalyst for positive change in the area of economic development in the north central region.<br><br>Comment on how USAID’s coordination role, expertise in creating public-private partnerships, ability to employ science and technology, and mobilizing community support can enhance stakeholder impact while minimizing the cost to USAID. | USAID, with the GDA perspective, has managed to leverage funds, and expand the scope of stakeholders and target populations as well as the potential local system-wide effects of value chain development processes, of its Economic Growth investment operations in the north-central Nicaraguan region, through the consortium, partnership and alliance-building strategy of ACORDAR programme’s design and overall implementation strategy and approach.<br><br>ACORDAR’s lessons learning and accumulated knowledge has become a strong bases for USAID to lead value chain-related rural development policy dialogue among the donors community, private sector actors and relevant Nicaraguan public institutions, specially in the specialized donors-government dialogue mechanisms (e.g. PRORURAL-I, small and mediun enterprises boards, etc.). |   |

**Annex 4  
Survey Questionnaire**

**PROYECTO ACORDAR - EVALUACIÓN FINAL  
ENCUESTA A PRODUCTORES/AS**

| I. UBICACION GEOGRAFICA   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| A. UBICACIÓN GEOGRÁFICA   |  |   | B. IDENTIFICACIÓN ENCUESTADOR   |   |
|   |  |   | CÓDIGO  |   |
| 1. Departamento / Región:   | <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>   | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| 2. Municipio:   | <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>   | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| 3. Comarca:   | <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>   | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| 4. Comunidad:   | <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>   | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
|   |  |   | 5. Nombre Encuestador: <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>                   |   |
|   |  |   | 6. Código Encuesta: <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>                     |   |
|   |  |   | 7. Supervisor: <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>                           |   |
|   |  |   | 8. Boleta Completa, Revisada y Aprobada: <input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/> |   |
| II. IDENTIFICACION DEL PRODUCTOR O PRODUCTORA BENEFICIARIO DE ACORDAR |  |   |   |   |
| A. IDENTIFICACIÓN DEL PRODUCTOR(A)                                    |  |   |   |   |

9. Nombres y Apellidos del Productor(a):

10. Sexo del Entrevistado: H  M  11. Edad:  años

12. Cedula de Identidad:

13. Numero de años que ha trabajado con ACORDAR

|      |                    |                  |  |                 |  |
|------|--------------------|------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 13.1 | 1a. Participacion  | Fecha de Entrada |  | Fecha de Salida |  |
| 13.2 | 2da. Participacion | Fecha de entrada |  | Fecha de Salida |  |

P0 Situacion Inicial del Productor. - ¿Qué hacia el productor antes de trabajar con ACORDAR?





Annex 5

**Sampling Sizes Matrixes for diverse margins of error and degrees of confidence  
(finite populations)**

| Confidence Level 1- $\alpha$ /2 | $z$ (1- $\alpha$ /2) | ( $\alpha$ ) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 90%                             | 0.05                 | 1.64         |
| 95%                             | 0.025                | 1.96         |
| 97%                             | 0.015                | 2.17         |
| 99%                             | 0.005                | 2.58         |

**N [Universe size] 7,700**

**p [Probability] 0.5**

**CL: Confidence Level d: maximum estimation error**

| CL/d       | 10.0% | 9.0% | 8.0% | 7.0% | 6.0% | <b>5.0%</b> | 4.0% | 3.0%  | 2.0%  | 1.0%  |
|------------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 90%        | 67    | 82   | 104  | 135  | 182  | 260         | 399  | 681   | 1,380 | 3,589 |
| <b>95%</b> | 95    | 117  | 147  | 191  | 258  | <b>366</b>  | 557  | 937   | 1,830 | 4,274 |
| 97%        | 116   | 143  | 180  | 233  | 314  | 444         | 672  | 1,118 | 2,129 | 4,655 |
| 99%        | 163   | 200  | 252  | 325  | 436  | 613         | 916  | 1,491 | 2,701 | 5,264 |

**N [Universe size] 7,700**

**p [Probability] 0.5**

**CL: Confidence Level d: maximum estimation error**

| CL/d       | 10.0% | 9.0% | 8.0% | 7.0% | 6.0% | <b>5.0%</b> | 4.0% | 3.0%  | 2.0%  | 1.0%  |
|------------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 90%        | 67    | 82   | 104  | 135  | 183  | 262         | 404  | 696   | 1,443 | 4,051 |
| <b>95%</b> | 95    | 117  | 148  | 192  | 260  | <b>370</b>  | 567  | 966   | 1,943 | 4,945 |
| 97%        | 116   | 143  | 181  | 235  | 317  | 450         | 686  | 1,159 | 2,284 | 5,463 |
| 99%        | 164   | 201  | 254  | 329  | 442  | 625         | 944  | 1,565 | 2,954 | 6,321 |



## Annex 6

### Key Actor Interview

#### **EVALUACION ACORDAR - GUIA DE ENTREVISTA**

**Con Sr. Jefferson Shriver (CRS) – Primer Director de ACORDAR**

30 de Agosto 2012

CRS, Managua

*Presentación del Sr. Shriver*

1. *¿Cuál fue la TOC de ACORDAR en la Fase-I?*
2. *Considera Usted que los elementos de la TOC Fase-I de ACORDAR respondían a las problemáticas de los productores, y los objetivos de desarrollo de la USAID para Nicaragua? ¿Por qué?*
3. *¿Fue la TOC de la Fase I aplicada en todo su contenido? Evidencia*
4. *¿Cuáles fueron los componentes más efectivos en la TOC Fase I en pro de los logros de ACORDAR Fase I?*
5. *¿Qué logros se obtuvieron con la Fase I respecto a:*
  - a. *Ingresos*
  - b. *Empleo*
  - c. *Pobreza?*
6. *¿Que otros resultados intermedios principales se lograron?*
7. *¿Qué elementos aplicados de la Fase I contribuyeron a los resultados de la Fase II?*
8. *¿Hubo entendimiento entre todos los socios de ACORDAR en cuanto a la importancia de los elementos de la TOC de la Fase I? ¿Hubieron algunos desacuerdos? ¿Cómo se dirimieron? ¿Cuál fue su posición al respecto?*
9. *¿Hubo cambios en la TOC a lo largo de su implementación durante la Fase I? Si hubo cambios.....*
  - a. *Por que se dieron los cambios?*
  - b. *En qué aspectos de la TOC se operaron los cambios y que repercusiones tuvieron para el proyecto?*
10. *Factores del Contexto durante Fase I:*
  - a. *Cuáles fueron los principales factores que incidieron de manera negativa y positiva en la implementación de ACORDAR Fase I?*
  - b. *Qué nivel de repercusiones para el éxito del programa tuvieron esos factores?*
11. *Sobre el modelo de organización utilizado para la implementación del proyecto:*
  - a. *¿Cómo se fue construyendo este modelo?*

- b. *¿Considera que este modelo fue efectivo en la Fase I, para conseguir los resultados del proyecto al final de la F-I?*
- c. *Qué lecciones le quedan de la aplicación del modelo de organización utilizado para la implementación del proyecto?*

12. *Sobre el SM&E*

- a. *¿Le fue útil la información generada por el SM&E? ¿Por qué?*
- b. *¿Habían algunos aspectos que necesitaban mejorarse del sistema?*

13. *Qué opina sobre la evaluación de Medio Término? ¿En qué contribuyo a la Fase II?*

14. *Sostenibilidad de los resultados de ACORDAR*

- a. *¿Cuáles son los principales retos para la sostenibilidad de los resultados del programa?*
- b. *¿Considera que las Organizaciones de Productores están en capacidad de continuar los emprendimientos de negocios, una vez finalizado el programa? Explique...*

15. *Apalancamiento Fase I:*

- a. *Qué estrategias se implementaron para apalancar otras fuentes de financiamiento? ¿Qué se logro?*



Lic. Jefferson Shriver (CRS) durante la entrevista realizada por el Lic. Rene Escoto.

**Rene:** Buenos días, el objetivo de esta entrevista conocer las perspectivas tuyas para terminar de definir el enfoque, los efectos conceptuales generales, algunos instrumentos más específicos que desarrollar. Hay aspectos también cuantitativos y cualitativos, pero en el enfoque estamos tratando de ser innovadores y flexibles. Nuestra perspectiva no es la tradicional, de caer como paracaidista, sino hacer una evaluación lo más objetiva posible.

Afortunadamente contamos contigo para la I Fase y con Jorge para la II Fase. Te presentare unas preguntas de rigor que seguir.

**René:** Como gerente de la I Fase, cómo describirías en sustancia lo que fue la TOC que estaba en mente? Imaginándote que estas en el momento de arranque del proyecto. Cómo describirías la TOC?

**Jefferson:** Para dar algunos antecedentes mas, el proyecto en si en conjunto con Mark Lundy, Santos Palma ayudamos entre los tres a diseñarlo, entonces y los antecedentes de ACORDAR surgen de dos proyectos antes de ACORDAR: uno fue el Michigan States University, lo del PFID que fueron ejecutados por varios organismos incluyendo TechNoservice- CRS. Y también el proyecto del DAP/Titulo II de AID, eso para mí fueron los cimientos de ACORDAR. Comenzamos con el DAP en el 2001, yo todavía no estaba por aquí, yo comencé a gerenciar el DAP el 2004 con CRS.

La TOC del DAP era un programa de seguridad alimentaria pero integramos desde el 2003 como semillas de agronegocio, entonces comenzamos a organizar productores en grupos pre-empresariales, introducimos cultivos no tradicionales para cambiar paradigmas y patrones de producción con varios productores que solo estaban con granos básicos. La TOC comenzó desde ahí. Entonces CRS trabaja con agro negocios y cadenas de valor, pero trata de comenzar con productores que no están insertados en procesos de mercado competitivos. En muchos casos estos procesos comienzan con programas de seguridad alimentaria pero no puedes tener intervenciones únicamente enfocadas en agricultura de la subsistencia, sino tratar las intervenciones como una trayectoria de la agricultura que es para la seguridad alimentaria hasta que participan en los mercados competitivos. Es un continuo. Y CRS está en ese diseño. Creo que nosotros nos distinguimos de otros organismos incluso de los que están en el Consorcio que comienzan, parte de la intervención de productores ya participando en la cadena y quizás lo llevan a un acompañamiento para donde se inserten mas, sean mas competitivos, con eso puede ser que logres buenos resultados, pero para nosotros lo que logra más impacto social es lograr llevar a los productores de la agricultura de subsistencia, de la pobreza más aguda a insertarlos en proyectos de mercados competitivos y cadenas de valor. Obviamente para nosotros creemos que es un proceso de 10 años, entonces lo que ha pasado en Nicaragua con el DAP, el MSU, luego con ACORDAR es toda una trayectoria, es algo más bonito que queremos sistematizar con mas enfoque, porque habían 5000 productores en el DAP, y de ellos casi 1800 casi 2000, comenzaron a participar en lo de MSU, casi esa misma cantidad de productores del DAP y MSU, participaron en ACORDAR. Luego agregamos otros actores, había productores que tenían capacidad de producir y vender productos alto valor, pero que no estaban organizados. Otros que ya tenían niveles de organización muy buena, agregando a TechNoserve a la alianza, ellos trabajaron con productores que estaban bien insertados en los mercados pero que todavía faltaban niveles de organización, desarrollo empresarial, en fin varios elementos. Entonces la TOC era eso al final, lograr apoyar productores en sus niveles de organización empresarial, en sus niveles de producción y poscosecha para agregar un valor a sus productos, para que produjeran otra cosa posiblemente que piensen primero en la demanda del mercado. Antes de sembrar vincularlos con mercados más competitivos. Muchos de ellos en el segmento de mercado que apunto ACORDAR, como el 30% es para el mercado internacional y 70% para el mercado nacional.

*Lo que se buscaba era que los ingresos de los productores se aumentaran, si lo logramos a través de una inserción sobre los mercados como tal, mercados más rentables, era mixto y podría decir que en algunos casos sí, y en otros siguieron con el mercado informal pero con más productividad, mejores rendimientos, productos con más valor agregado. El caso del tomate por ejem, los productores aumentaron increíblemente su rendimiento por las tecnologías que utilizaron, mejoraron su ingreso en gran parte por eso y no por tener un mercado especializado de tomate. Caso contrario el café y cacao, en algunos casos raíces y tubérculos donde se pudo identificar e insertar productores en mercados o nichos de mercados más exigentes, de mayor valor para mercados de exportación.*

*Lo bonito y complejo de ACORDAR es que trabajamos con muchos cultivos, si uno mira la cantidad de cadenas con las cuales trabajamos es impresionante, yo diría que tuviéramos que hacerlo de nuevo, reduciría el número de cultivos, porque esos en algunos casos no nos permitió fortalecer la cadena como tal como queríamos.*

*La TOC era esa insertar pequeños productores en varios niveles, en varios estados en mercados competitivos a través de 3 eslabones de la cadena: 1) Producción 2) El manejo Poscosecha y 3) Comercialización.*

*Como parte de esto era trabajar en la parte de políticas públicas de la cadena, con las comisiones y allí si se logro cierto enfoque, el enfoque en las comisiones del frijol, de raíces y tubérculos y café. El éxito en los tres no era igual. Creo que tuvimos más éxito en las comisiones del frijol, allí se logro incidir en las políticas públicas del país. Y eso va a seguir... creo que eso, fue el gran éxito de las comisiones. Café no prospero, porque no se reconoció lo avanzado que era el sector de café. Yo desde la dirección empuje en la selección de un nicho dentro del café, como la cadena de café orgánico, pero eso nunca despego, había suficiente trabajo en las comisiones que se decidió enfocar más en la cadena de raíces y tubérculos, que si tuvo cierto éxito y lo del frijol que para mí fue medular. El éxito era lograr convertir una cadena productiva en una cadena de valor, de reunir los actores que trabajen juntos, pero por trabajar en semejantes cadenas no se logro convertir de cadena productiva a cadena de valor las hortalizas y las frutas por ejemplo, con cacao fue propuesto para la II fase, pero creo que no tuvo tanto eco con AID.*

*AID estaba preocupado por tocar el tema de políticas públicas por la situación del país. Era delicado trabajar con política públicas. Para mí no era tan compartida la visión de trabajar en las comisiones, pero fue un gran éxito con frijol, pero hace falta hacer una comisión de cacao, aprovechando que existe en el país, y está muy pequeño y llevarlo a otro nivel. Con café hay muchas cosas que se pueden hacer.*

**René:** *La TOC desde un inicio se planteaba centrarse en los 3 eslabones antes mencionados, los demás lo dejaban como un poco fuera del marco con el propósito de interpretar ingreso. Esta TOC diría que coherentemente aplicada en la I Fase.*

**Jefferson:** *Yo diría que sí. Fuertemente en producción y poscosecha, comenzamos hacer mas incidencias con mercados finalizando la I fase e iniciando la II fase, porque la primera si fue producción en base a demanda de mercado, poscosecha hubo muchos procesos de poscosecha en cuanto al procesamiento primario de los productos.*

*Pero yo me pregunto qué tanto logramos como relaciones comerciales de tu a tu, para acortar un poco la cadena y reducir la intermediación? Creo que fue hasta la II fase que lo logramos mas en esto. Puede ser que como abarcamos mucho en el proyecto y había tanto que hacer para mejorar niveles de rendimiento, para comenzar agregar valor a los productos en ese primer nivel de procesamiento que nos absorbió bastante.*

*Y la organización empresarial se ayudo bastante. La organización de mujeres se avanza mucho en la primera fase. CARITAS-Estelí comenzaron a organizar productores en la I fase y consolidar esa organización, eso no existía. CECOOPSEMEIN trabajo enorme para lograr que se*

*consolidara mas su empresa de segundo piso, y empezaran a tomar responsabilidades para la parte del frijol. Fue un trabajo inmenso. Ser un actor principal en la cadena de valor. Toda la estrategia de salida, evaluación y la sostenibilidad tiene que ver que todas estas organizaciones sean fuertes, reducir la dependencia a CRS, TechNoserve, en las organizaciones locales lo más pronto posible, sino será el fracaso asegurado si dependen de nosotros hasta el ultimo día.*

*Yo no he revisado los indicadores en los últimos 2 años como para mostrar que hemos logrado la sostenibilidad de varias organizaciones. AID fue muy bueno con nosotros al decir hemos estado dando asistencia a varios de esos organismos por 10 años, que pueden hacer ustedes en la II fase para asegurar que logran cierta sostenibilidad para no depender de nosotros ya.*

*Ellos nos empujaron fue una relación de apoyo con AID en ese sentido, al decir que tienen que incluir eso en la segunda fase. No nos aseguraron nada que sería un proyecto de más de 5 años. Mucho tenía que ver con la Evaluación de Medio término para asegurarnos si darían otros 30 meses más, eso no estaba seguro, y generaba ciertos problemas con el enfoque conceptual del proyecto.*

**René:** *Y la evaluación intermedia como la valoras?*

**Jefferson:** *Yo creo que al final la valoración era positiva. Al final fue muy colegiala, sentía que Donald Jackson y su equipo llegaban ayudarnos aprender y alistar las bases para la II fase. Ellos reconocieron desde el principio que no contaron ni con tiempo ni personal para ser un análisis tan exhaustivo para hacer un dictamen de esa forma. Con toda la voluntad del mundo, ACORDAR era tan grande para llegar al fondo del barril, pero nosotros confiábamos en lo bueno del sistema de nuestra base de datos.*

*Hay mucha información en el sistema y puede hacer evaluaciones al azar. AID en la II Fase fue muy riguroso. Siento que es un proyecto muy evaluado y validado. Es increíble la cantidad de visitas de AID, me tocaba ser anfitrión de visitas de AID. Eso nos dio visibilidad. Fue riguroso para gerenciar el proyecto.*

**René:** *Esto nos lleva un poco al sistema de monitoreo y evaluación. El sistema de seguimiento en la I Fase te fue útil?*

**Jefferson:** *Yo conozco bien el sistema que usamos. Y eso fue una clave del éxito desde el principio, o sea como vas a lograr que 20 organismos trabajen bien juntos. Cuando uno piensa en el diseño del proyecto, este aspecto es clave porque se tiene que seleccionar socios que saben trabajar en consorcio, y que no están tratando de jalar agua para su propio molino, ser protagonista... tiene que ver con la forma de liderazgo del CRS, de ser un buen servidor del poder y dar accesibilidad a los demás, no es fácil, pero creo que esa fue la clave del éxito.*

*Nos reunimos todos al inicio, CRS propuso y logro que los demás se apropiaran de un sistema en común de monitoreo y evaluación. Indicadores en común, recolección de datos en común, medición de ingresos que nadie lo había hecho, y había resistencia al inicio, pero al final gusto porque proporciono una herramienta de medición de impacto que no tenían antes.*

*Todos decidimos sobre eso, y en base a ese consenso fuimos en el mismo barco, un proyecto tan grande que pudiera lograr presencia en el territorio desde el primer día, no se consigue tan fácil en los otros proyectos. Nuevamente te comento los cimientos del proyecto estaban en MSU y DAP, no fue un proyecto paracaidista, desde el primer día tuvimos presencia en las comunidades y bastante probabilidad. Eso permitió al proyecto lograr impacto a corto plazo.*

*Lo interesante de este proyecto es que era como de la base, y en parte es por eso que incluimos tantos cultivos, porque esa fue la demanda de los productores, fue la dinámica del consorcio como tal, y eso nos evito muchos dolores de cabeza en cuanto a lucha de poder.*

*En ACORDAR no hubo esa lucha de poder que se encuentra en los consorcios muchas veces. Se dio una buena alianza, y TechNoserve a pesar que son especialistas en agronegocios supieron cómo integrarse sin querer protagonizarse. Trabajaron en equipo y nosotros supimos darle visibilidad y que ellos no sintieran como la sombra de CRS cada vez que llegábamos.*

**René:** Ese trabajo, esa visión de CRS ya estaba en la TOC, o fue un estilo de gerencia?

**Jefferson:** Siento que es parte de la naturaleza de CRS, es parte de nuestro estilo de trabajo, en la propuesta hablamos tener un comité compuesto por los líderes y el consorcio que en ese momento era LW, AG, TechNoserve y Servicios Financieros Latinoamericanos (LAFISE), para que asesora el SOP durante la I fase. Ese comité no funcionó como tenía que funcionar, no había mucho interés por parte de la gente de reunirse, pero la comunicación sí fue constante. Pero sería interesante preguntarles a los socios si sintieron que se les dio la visibilidad por parte de CRS. Pero yo siento que tiene que ver con el estilo de trabajo de CRS. La relación que tuvimos con los socios desde el principio fue muy buena y sigue siendo muy buena.

**René:** Cuando hablamos del impacto, como se entiende el impacto en la I Fase? A que indicadores o aspectos mencionarías como impacto positivo?

**Jefferson:** Este trabajo que establecimos, yo podría distribuirlo en 3 ámbitos.

**ALIANZAS:** Para no olvidarlo voy hablar de las alianzas establecidas con las alcaldías, que fue fenomenal. Yo todavía estoy sorprendido que dentro del contexto de Nicaragua que logramos tanta cooperación de los gobiernos municipales. Al inicio LAFISE que iba hacer el gran actor del sector privado que iba a dar todo el dinero de contrapartida para GRA al final no pudo conducir. Quizás no por falta de ganas, sino la forma como fue concebido el dar el financiamiento a los productores con la parte de acopio, producción simplemente no funciona. En cambio los gobiernos municipales pusieron la contrapartida desde el principio, se adueñaron de todo el proyecto, con mucho protagonismo se integraron al proyecto eso a nivel de los gobiernos municipales. También a nivel de las relaciones comerciales con proveedores de insumo, micro financieras, compradores a nivel de la región, a nivel nacional, eso fue impresionante como la fue la dinámica de las relaciones en la cadena de actores. Que si se logro en la I Fase, para eliminar la intermediación. Era relaciones con muchos intermediarios, muchos proveedores de servicios y los gobiernos municipales.

Para mi, el proyecto se dividió en 3 ambitos:

**1.PRODUCCION Y ADOPCION DE TECNOLOGIAS:** La introducción de todas las tecnologías, la adopción de los invernaderos, la adopción del riego por goteo, lograr que 600 manzanas que era riego por inundación adoptan la tecnología de riego por goteo, es increíble que la gente comienza a comprar semillas muy caras, a cuidarlas y ponerlas en invernaderos e incluir el invernadero como parte de su costo de producción, en vez de toda la cultura de secarlas al aire libre, la plasticultura, los túneles, lo que utilizaban los productores de hortalizas. A ese nivel la adopción de la tecnología en base a lo que presento el proyecto fue muy bueno.

Considero que el **fortalecimiento a la organización empresarial fue muy IMPORTANTE** durante la I Fase. Porque algunos estaban débiles al respecto. Los sistemas de toma de decisiones, no democráticas, algunos líderes tuvieron que salir para darles espacio a mejores líderes en la organización. Fueron momento difíciles para lograr fortalecerlo, había muchos complejos en las instituciones, pero al final uno ve lo resultados, pero más en la II Fase, pero fue fruto del trabajo y acompañamiento durante los 5 años. Lograr que utilicen sus planes de negocio, lograr que tomen decisiones más democráticas en base a un sistema de gobernanza en las instituciones mejor diseñado. Todo esto fue muy importante.

**René:** Como han medido que realmente ha habido una adopción de tecnologías por parte del productor?

**Jefferson:** *Se mide en parte que él o ella lo valido en la parcela, como fue efectiva la adopción de la tecnología a través de los rendimientos, ahí se puede ver el tipo de monitoreo y su trabajo para medir los cambios medidos. También estaban los costos de producción que en algunos casos se aumentaron, pero si uno ve el análisis costo-beneficio, se ve mayor el beneficio. La captación de agua que se realizo a través de los tanques, los reservorios de agua, el tema de acceso a agua es tan crítica para los agronegocios, y se ve que los productores aprovecharon lo que el proyecto le dio.*

**2 POSCOSECHA:** *Es un mundo de cosas que adoptaron. El proyecto trabajo y construyo la planta de frijoles para lograr procesamiento básico y acceso amplio a miles de productores, en la I Fase. Se comenzó a usar de forma incipiente en la I Fase, y se continuó usando en la II Fase.*

*También en la I Fase se inicio a construir la planta procesadora de raíces y tubérculos en Jinotega y se termino en la II Fase, pero todo el plan de negocio estuvo basado para la I Fase. Los beneficios húmedos a nivel de los agricultores se comenzaron a utilizar en la I Fase agregando valor a la producción.*

*Luego la POSCOSECHA, semejante inversión en la infraestructura poscosecha y el uso de él para agregar valor, los beneficios húmedos, las plantas procesadoras, eso se dio y de gran manera.*

**René:** *Si miráramos eso como dos grandes ejes de impacto, cual sería más importante? Los dos serian importantes? Difícil de establecerlo en la I Fase en sentido a contribución y términos de ingreso, empleo y pobreza, cual sería tu apreciación?*

**Jefferson:** *Si tuviera que escoger en cuanto a la contribución de ingreso escogería la parte productiva. Porque la otra tecnología que no había era el uso de la semilla mejorada. En este caso está el ejemplo del productor Ernesto Vallejos, comenzó con granos básicos, tenía su finca hipotecada, el Procredito estaba llegando a hipotecar, y el cambio el cultivo por papaya taiwanesa y otra hortaliza. El proyecto facilito el acceso a la semilla, porque al final ellos compraron la semilla. La semilla de esa papaya ni existía en el país, y tuvimos que buscarla, y el MAGFOR nos dio mucho problema para poder importarla. Entonces el comenzó a usar la semilla sembrando en el invernadero facilitado por el proyecto y vendió a Wal-Mart. Esa es una historia de éxito. El en la poscosecha, contrato a mujeres de las cooperativas para lavar la papaya y venderla a Wal-Mart, originando empleos. Ahora su ingreso principal es la venta de plántulas del invernadero. Está vendiendo servicios en la cadena, el es un ejemplo de varios que existen. En este caso lo determinante fue la adopción de tecnologías y el convencimiento de producir otras cosas.*

**René:** *Amplio su mente, su estrategia productiva y de venta.*

**Jefferson:** *La asistencia que se le dio para logra la producción escalonada para que pudiera atender al supermercado y suplirlo todo el año. Y el logro el BPA.*

**René:** *El tema del cooperativismo fue objeto de apoyo?*

**Jefferson:** *Fue objeto de apoyo bastante en el proyecto, la gobernanza de las cooperativas. A donde podemos mejorar? En la formación de liderazgo, porque qué pasa, trabajamos con la cooperativa, con los status, asegurar que hay órganos, controles que permiten cambio de liderazgo, etc., pero al final si tienes un mal líder puede buscar la forma de malear las cosas. Si pudiéramos hacer otro proyecto, insistiría en la formación y fortalecimiento de liderazgo, para que la gente aprenda hacer más líderes en las instituciones. Cómo ser más democrático, como compartir responsabilidades, como ser más transparente...eso me gustaría recalcar para el*



*futuro, porque nadie en el consorcio lo trabajo. Esta sería una lección aprendida. No es un tema común ni fácil de trabajar. Yo no tengo la idea de cómo abordarlo, pero es necesario a todos los niveles.*

**René:** *El tema de género se incluyó desde la I Fase?*

**Jefferson:** *El tema de género, yo personalmente trate incluirlo en el diseño del proyecto. Se planteo que si íbamos abordar que se tenga mayor participación de las mujeres en la parte de producción poscosecha, hay que buscar organizaciones que entiendan del tema. Encontramos la FEM), y CRS nunca había trabajado con ellas, y es una fundación que tiene una composición muy única que es difícil de replicar. Son compuestas de 100% de mujeres que son dueñas de su tierra, algunas tienen esposos, pero muchas son viudas.*

*Buscamos organizaciones de cooperativas o productores organizados que ya tenían equidad de género como parte de su quehacer.*

*ADDAC, AG estaba tomando muy en serio este aspecto y desde el principio se quiso el enfoque de organismos comprometidos. Pero decidimos tener a la asesora técnica de género hasta la II Fase, porque no lo logramos en la I fase, y es algo que hubiéramos hecho desde el principio. Tuvimos algunos indicadores de género, al principio pero como era un tema transversal, fue un desafío como incidir en el proyecto. No se logro insertar en el proyecto como tenía que ser.*

*Se logro de forma parcial, a nivel de socios, pero no encontramos cooperativas que tuvieran el enfoque de género que buscábamos. A nivel de socios LW tenía más el enfoque de género que TechNoserve, el cual lo tenía muy bajo.*

*Como había voluntad de incluir el enfoque de género en las cooperativas, hicimos una Consultoría en la I Fase con un buen documento que fue consensuado por todos e incluía el tener una política de género en cada institución que aseguraba la participación de la mujer, y la equidad de género en cada organización. Se perseguía lograr que adoptaran en las cooperativas una política de género que asegurara participación de la mujer en el liderazgo, en las juntas directivas, en posiciones de poder dentro de las cooperativas.*

**René:** *Hablando del targeting como fue el proceso de selección de los beneficiarios?*

**Jefferson:** *Fue un rastreo de algunos beneficiarios de los programas de seguridad alimentaria, eso como un porcentaje, otro del MSU, para mí era seguir acompañando grupos en procesos agroempresariales para terminarlo bien. Eran 30 meses nada más, si hubiésemos sabido que era para 5 años, quizás hubiésemos iniciado con algunos productores más pobres, pero continuamos relaciones que ya estaban en el camino.*

**René:** *La mayoría de los productores de ACORDAR fueron jalados de los otros programas?*

**Jefferson:** *Si, aunque habían algunas nuevas relaciones tales como CARITAS-Estelí, FEM, había su gente nueva. Sería bueno preguntar a Juan Alberto Molina cuantas personas nuevas eran de los 5400 que estaban en la I Fase. Yo diría que máximo unos 800.*

*En la II Fase ampliamos, éramos mucho más ambiciosos. Ampliamos a seis municipios más entre los cuales estaban Rio San Juan, Boaco, etc.*

**René:** *En la I Fase se podría decir que hubo un intento y una aplicación coherente de la TOC? No hubo cambio fundamental?*

**Jefferson:** Lo único que agregaría para la I Fase, es la parte de agua . AID llevo a decir que querían incorporar el tema de agua en agricultura. Allí agregamos con los 2 millones de dólares un componente de agua como parte del programa en general. Era acceso de agua para producción y agua potable. Esto fue impulsado por AID con el acuerdo total del Consorcio.

**René:** Hay algún factor externo que afecto para bien o para mal durante la I Fase que sería bueno mencionar?

**Jefferson:** Hubo un factor externo que fueron las elecciones municipales del 2008. Era un choque para el proyecto porque tuvimos que asegurar los acuerdos conseguidos con los primeros alcaldes, y que se mantuvieran. Eso lo logramos pero si no lo hubiésemos logrado, toda la contrapartida que pusieron hubiese fracasado.

**René:** Como lo lograron?

**Jefferson:** Visitar oficina por oficina. Cabildeo con las autoridades a decirles que eso les conviene, esto fue firmado por el alcalde antes.

**René:** Ese trabajo lo hizo CRS? Los socios? En conjunto, se dividió el trabajo, elaboraron una estrategia?

**Jefferson:** Si hubo una estrategia en la I Fase donde habían 3 organismos de la sociedad civil que fueron contratados como consultores, eran socios pero el convenio era consultoría. Era liderado por Ronald Flores, nuestro asesor técnico para municipalismo. Ellos eran parte del territorio. El IMC (Instituto de Mujer y Comunidad), Cocolmecca, había uno más que no recuerdo.

Ellos tenían mucha credibilidad y presencia en el territorio, y ya habían trabajado por años en las arcadias. No llegamos como extraños. Ya había la formación de productores que estaban incidiendo a nivel de los comités de desarrollo municipal. Fue un trabajo en conjunto que se logro. También hubo una caída en los precios de los alimentos, habían desastres naturales pero no hicieron gran efecto así como la resercion económica.

La incertidumbre del AID en cuanto a su programa, la forma como el gobierno estaba respondiendo a las elecciones, incertidumbre en cuanto a que iba a pasar? Había mucha preocupación.

En ningún momento tuvimos conflicto con el Gobierno central, porque siempre lo vieron como un proyecto a favor de los pequeños productores, y no era de sociedad civil o de derechos humanos. Nunca hubo ese conflicto, el Embajador Calagan apoyo 100% el proyecto, llevo a todas las inauguraciones, conoció a varios productores. A mí me impresiono su labor como Embajador y su integración a las actividades del proyecto.

**René:** Con respecto a los beneficiarios no podemos decir que el grueso de los beneficiarios de los productores eran de los más pobres?

**Jefferson:** No eran de los más pobres, y no por no ser pequeños, porque habían muchos productores que el promedio era de 3 manzanas, y otros tenían 1 manzana, pero que pasaba era que son organizados, que están insertados en el mercado competitivo, reciben servicios financieros, son pequeños pero no los más pobres. Yo hago esa diferenciación. AID a veces estaba preocupado en decir que ACORDAR no está trabajando con los más pobres, es correcto! Pero en un proyecto de carencia de valor, no vas a trabajar con los más pobres. Los más pobres van a estar en los TAP, en los proyectos de título II en donde ya había varios de los que ya



*están, pero si son pequeños pero organizados. Yo hago esa diferenciación porque hay muchos que creen que solo trabajamos con medianos, pero no es cierto.*

**René:** *Si hay algo importante de mencionar, que piensas que debemos tomar en cuenta desde el punto de aprendizaje o lecciones aprendidas? Como valoras la Base de Datos?*

**Jefferson:** *Yo he sido usuario del sistema. Pedía datos cuando tenía que responder a donantes, AID, CRS para rendición de cuentas. A mí me impresiono que ellos pudieran arrastrar datos con rapidez y con precisión. Eso para mí es una forma de calificar el sistema, y así puedes medir impacto y ser preciso en quienes están recibiendo el beneficio.*

*Mucha gente criticaba el sistema porque lo llevaban como zompopos, un ejército de gente recogiendo información. Considero que en eso sería bueno plantearse como podemos ser más eficientes en recoger la información, y como ser más transparente en quien tiene acceso a la información sin comprometer confiabilidad.*

*En CRS queremos llegar a tener un sistema en un futuro, donde AID, CRS, LW, etc. puedan tener acceso a información al instante sobre los resultados. Ahorita está en manos de un equipo que elabora los datos los analiza y los difunden. Como transparentar esa información, ser menos tedioso en cuanto a recopilación? No sé cómo, pero es algo que debemos de trabajar. Porque que pasaba, muchas veces era esa dinámica de tensión; los técnicos llegaban al campo para dar asistencia técnica o para recoger información. Era un dilema.*

**René:** *Se mira una línea de base muy densa. Hubo un concepto de sistema de evaluación? O solo se concentraron en la línea de base en si misma?*

**Jefferson:** *La línea de base se elaboro con una muestra muy alta. Confiable para medir los resultados con confianza. Fue un proceso de debate dentro del Consorcio para llegar a un consenso de la metodología que se iba a utilizar para la línea de base.*

*Creo que eso sería todo por el momento. Voy a estar fuera en Octubre, pero me gustaría saber cómo les fue. Mucha suerte por este proceso!.*

**René:** *Muchas gracias a vos!*

## **Annex 7**

### **Study of a Case**

#### **Cooperativa Agropecuaria de Producción de Hortalizas R.L. (COPRAHOR)**

##### **1. Justificación de la selección de la experiencia de COPRAHOR**

Al Inicio de la implementación de ACORDAR, en la cadena de hortalizas existían seis actores importantes como posibles beneficiarios: la Cooperativa Agropecuaria de Servicios Tomatoya-Chagüite Grande (Coopastochag); COPRAHOR; la Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples Padre Odorico de Andrea (Coosempoda); Productores y Comercializadores de Totogalpa S.A. (Procontsa), la Central de Cooperativas de Servicios Múltiples de Exportación e Importación del Norte (CECOOPSEMEIN) y productores individuales.

COPRAHOR fue una de las cooperativas seleccionadas, aunque ya tenía antecedentes de recibir asistencia externa por uno de los socios de ACORDAR. Conformada inicialmente de manera legal por 17 socios en el año 2005, actualmente tiene 42 socios (2 son mujeres): 21 en Carreta Quebrada, donde cuentan con una propiedad de 0.5 mz, y 21 en Las Delicias (grupo de productores también formados por TechnoServe), con una propiedad de 0.17 mz. En promedio cada productor cuenta con 1.5 mz. Actualmente COPRAHOR es una cooperativa de producción, servicios de comercialización, preparación de suelos y compra de insumos en la cadena de valor hortícola, dirigida a mercados selectivos.

El caso de esta cooperativa fue seleccionado por el equipo de evaluación en vista que:

- i) Era un caso ilustrativo válido de la aplicación de la estrategia de ACORDAR de utilizar el modelo organizativo de las cooperativas para implementar las actividades de desarrollo de las cadenas de valor, en este caso, de las hortalizas; ii) En sí misma la experiencia de esta cooperativa resaltaba por ser considerada exitosa por el mismo Programa desde el punto de vista de haberse lo grado su graduación. Con este caso se abordarían las preguntas de evaluación relacionadas al modelo de las cooperativas y sus sostenibilidad y al desarrollo de cadenas de valor y los vínculos hacia atrás, pero también a la selección de los beneficiarios, género y efectividad de los instrumentos de intervención (inversiones de infraestructura, equipos y Fondo de Innovación).

##### **2. La problemática que enfrentaba COPRAHOR**

La cooperativa está ubicada en los municipios de Ciudad Darío y Sébaco, en la zona del Corredor Seco del país. Los productores producían al mismo tiempo todas sus parcelas en la zona y desvinculados entre sí, la producción de hortalizas estaba concentrada en unos pocos productos, con un deficiente manejo agronómico y bajo nivel tecnológico, sin acceso al crédito, muy poca capacidad de agregar valor a su producción enfrentando al mismo tiempo un mercado cada vez más exigente en calidad e inocuidad, no tenían un nicho de mercado establecido a pesar del potencial de mercado (sustituir importaciones), no tenían acceso oportuno y fiable a información de mercado sobre precios y estándares para la toma de decisiones, vendiéndose la producción a intermediarios a precios bajos y en términos desventajosos; a pesar de la corta distancia hasta los establecimientos de los variados proveedores de insumos en Sébaco, el acceso se dificulta en la época de invierno lo que encarece el costo de transporte de los insumos. Los productores estaban muy poco organizados, con poca visión empresarial y tenían relativamente poca vinculación con proveedores de servicios, lo que ha representado una desventaja y limitación para lograr rentabilidad,

beneficios económicos y el mejoramiento de sus niveles de vida. Las mujeres participaban relativamente poco y de manera más temporal a lo largo de la cadena.

### 3. Contexto y Antecedentes de la Experiencia de COPRAHOR.

COPRAHOR ha contado desde su creación con buenas oportunidades para integrarse en mejores términos a la cadena de hortalizas, acceder e intercambiar mejor información de mercado, crecer como organización cooperativa, gestionar recursos, enlazar con otros actores de la cadena, agregar más valor a su producción y mejorar el nivel de vida de sus miembros. La cooperativa comenzó con la comercialización conjunta de su producción hortícola y han avanzado en la integración vertical en la cadena incluyendo la producción de plántulas (tomate, Chiltoma criolla y de relleno, y berenjena) en ambiente protegido en Carreta Quebrada (en Las Delicias cada productor produce sus propias plántulas).

La Cooperativa ha ido creciendo en su membresía, está ubicada en una zona con fácil acceso al mercado local y nacional, a proveedores de servicios de desarrollo agrícola y rural, financieros y no financieros y a comunicación celular, tiene la oportunidad de establecer alianzas con otras instituciones y ONG de desarrollo y ha estado expuesta a una demanda diversificada y creciente de productos hortícolas por parte del Supermercado La Colonia (SLC). COPRAHOR ha venido recibiendo el acompañamiento y asistencia técnica y financiera externa desde su fundación, inicialmente gracias al apoyo del Programa PFID (USAID) en el año 2005, contando con la asistencia técnica en producción y desarrollo empresarial de TechnoServe, la que ha continuado en los últimos 5 años en el marco de ACORDAR.



El aprovechamiento de estas oportunidades se ha visto amenazado por la crisis económica internacional vía su impacto en los precios agrícolas, cuando han bajado, o con el incremento de los precios de los combustibles y de los insumos (agroquímicos), la reducción de la oferta crediticia no convencional con la crisis relacionada al “movimiento de no pago”, y por el comportamiento del clima, especialmente en términos de la intensidad de las lluvias vinculadas al cambio climático, lo que afecta tanto la producción como los caminos de acceso (p. e. el camino a Las Delicias).

### 4. La experiencia de COPRAHOR y su interpretación

En cada eslabón de la cadena de hortalizas se han enfrentado retos, ante los cuales el Plan Estratégico para la Sostenibilidad Empresarial (2010-13), había planteado algunas líneas de acción. La revisión de este Plan muestra que tiene objetivos específicos bien definidos, sin embargo no presenta un razonamiento que sustente una priorización de las acciones contempladas.

A continuación se analizan estas acciones en varios ámbitos de relevancia para la Teoría de Cambio de ACORDAR y desde la perspectiva de las Preguntas de Evaluación.

### Eslabón de producción y acopio:

Los productores socios de COPRAHOR cuentan con tierras aptas, con abundante recursos hídricos, buenas condiciones agroecológicas y mucha experiencia para producir hortalizas; incluso ya han adoptado nuevas tecnologías (uso de plástico mulch, riego por goteo, fertiriego, semillas certificadas), especialmente en el manejo agronómico de hortalizas.

Su capacidad productiva ha mejorado en cantidad y en calidad, aprovechando la calidad de los suelos y la permanente accesibilidad a agua, adoptando nuevas tecnologías con buenas prácticas agrícolas (BPA) que fueron adquiridas mediante capacitaciones (2008 en Carreta Quebrada), las que han sido valoradas muy positivamente por la JD; la Cooperativa produce de manera permanente y escalonada una creciente gama de productos hortícolas: de chiltoma relleno a tomate y luego a chiltoma criolla, chilote, pepino, berenjena, zuchini y ayote. Cada productor se encarga de la producción de su propia parcela.

El incremento de sus niveles de producción ha sido el resultado especialmente de la incorporación de más productores socios (de Las Delicias del Municipio vecino de Ciudad Darío) que decidieron hacer, con el auspicio de TechnoServe, en el año 2009 para así responder a una necesidad de incrementar su producción dada las limitaciones en la tenencia de la tierra en ese entonces, en vista de la demanda del SLC. Su capacidad actual, sin embargo, todavía no es suficiente para atender otros mercados.

Las zonas de producción están cercanas a las zonas de inundación, siendo vulnerables al cambio climático (sequías, inundaciones, efectos adicionales del cambio climático), aunque en los últimos años no han tenido afectaciones.

Para el año 2010, con la formulación de su Plan Estratégico, la Cooperativa se propuso producir hortalizas de calidad de manera inocua (certificación de BPA), diversificada, escalonada. También se proponía reanudar la producción de plántulas (40-46 mil/mes) para socios. Se cuentan con 4 túneles equivalente un área de 72m<sup>2</sup>, y bandejas plásticas; se estima utilizar el 32-37% de la capacidad instalada por lo que se podría atender a productores no socios. Las plántulas favorecen un mayor porcentaje de germinación de las semillas, menor mortalidad en el campo y mejores rendimientos (en parte debido al sistema radicular más desarrollado). La producción se maneja por medio de pedidos y el pago lo realiza el productor una vez recibe las plántulas. El precio por plántula es de C\$0.50, tanto para socios como productores individuales; la semilla debe ser comprada por aparte por el productor.

Con relación a los insumos se procurarían alianzas con casas comerciales para comprar en bloque y obtener financiamiento, de igual manera se planteaba el lograr que los productores socios accedieran a crédito, mejorando sus capacidades incluso para la movilización de donaciones vía proyectos.

Dada la demanda de productores socios y no socios por servicios complementarios de preparación de suelos para aumentar los rendimientos y agregar más valor a su producción hortícola, lo que se derivaba de la creciente demanda del SLC, se planteó la adquisición de un tractor con sus implementos (romplona, grada, etc.). El proyecto fue presentado y aprobado por el Fondo de Innovación (FI), para que COPRAHOR proveyera el servicio innovador de encamado alto (los cultivos de hortalizas necesitan de suelos bien aireados y sueltos en camas altas que aseguren un buen drenaje), que según estudios puede incrementar los rendimientos hasta en un 35%. El FI financiaría los implementos y el tractor sería adquirido mediante un préstamo bancario. El precio

estimado para este servicio, por pedido, será de \$140 por manzana a pagarse en efectivo. Con el proyecto se pretendía además ampliar la gama de servicios proveídos por la Cooperativa, dentro de una estrategia de involucramiento de los mismos socios (capacitados en la selección del tipo de servicio de mecanización según las características de las parcelas) en la promoción y retroalimentación de la calidad brindada de estos servicios.

La Cooperativa, estimando que el tractor tiene una disponibilidad ociosa del 70%, podría además posicionarse como la única proveedora del servicio en la zona en el mediano plazo, estableciendo relaciones comerciales especiales con los productores de la zona, especialmente con COOPROVASEB. Este posicionamiento, sin embargo, no está exento de los riesgos que una posición monopólica usualmente genera en términos del nivel de las tarifas y la calidad y oportunidad de los servicios a ser proveídos, aunque la expectativa de que COOPRESAVEB llegue a representar el 58% de la demanda le dará a esta cooperativa poder de negociación y exigencia de calidad con relación COOPREHOR.

En el centro de acopio se acopian, lavan y seleccionan las hortalizas. ACORDAR invirtió (2008) en instalaciones y equipos de acopio y empaque contribuyendo además a la capitalización de la cooperativa; se impulsaron BPM (haciendo análisis de costos y mediante alianzas con otras organizaciones relevantes) en el uso de los mismos y la certificación de la actividad (con MINSA y MAGFOR). Incluso esto ya tiene implicaciones para el SLC: *“..hasta ahora nosotros como empresa nos estamos metiendo a los que son las BPM, que además ya el MINSA y el MAGFOR los están comenzando a exigir y estamos en este proceso”*. Sin embargo, COPRAHOR no cuenta todavía con todas las normas de seguridad para los trabajadores y socios.

#### Eslabón de la comercialización:

COPRAHOR ya había establecido relaciones comerciales con HORTIFRUTI desde antes que iniciara ACORDAR, con el apoyo de TechnoServe, organización que también facilitó el establecimiento de una alianza estratégica (“ganar ganar”) estable con el SLC; aunque los funcionarios del Supermercado expresaron que *“... [no sabían] que [las cooperativas] estaban con el apoyo de un proyecto que les estaba ayudando a mejorar sus condiciones de trabajo pero se nota en la calidad de los productos.”* La Junta Directiva (JD) de la Cooperativa señaló que con HORTIFRUTI establece convenios semanales por escrito estableciendo precios según un monitoreo de los precios en el mercado de mayoreo.

En el caso del SLC, para el año 2010 ya se hacían dos entregas semanales (C\$50,000 cada una en el 2010) de 19 tipos de hortalizas (especialmente tomate criollo y chiltoma de cocinar; otros productos son: pepino, chilote, chiltoma rellena, elote criollo, berenjena, etc.), vendiéndole aproximadamente el 60% de su producción. El pago de SLC se recibe a los 8 días después de cada entrega y la Cooperativa paga a los productores dos o tres días después, descontando los costos de procesamiento, transporte y el 8% de comisión para la Cooperativa. El producto no seleccionado por SLC es vendido a los intermediarios locales que llegan al centro de acopio de la cooperativa a esperarlo.

Para el Supermercado las entregas de COPRAHOR han representado entre el 35% y el 82% de sus compras de estos productos hortícolas, más específicamente el 58%, 35% y 46% del total de tomate criollo (para el cual existe potencial de ampliación), chiltoma de cocinar y pepino, respectivamente. Existe también el potencial de ofrecerles otras hortalizas al SLC. En el marco de esta alianza, el SLC le entregó un camión refrigerado de 8 TM al crédito, sin intereses, el cual se paga por cuotas en



cada entrega; además de darles equipos y otros insumos. Representantes de ambas partes negocian los precios.

Los socios, al momento de formular el Plan Estratégico, ya tenían conocimientos acumulados (por los vínculos establecidos con actores de la cadena) sobre cómo se trabaja y negociaba en mercados selectivos pero dependían del SLC como único cliente. Miembros de COPRAHOR adquirieron estos conocimientos también a través de talleres, capacitaciones, intercambios de experiencias, días de campo y ruedas de negocios; se ha reportado que también intercambian información con otros actores en los eslabones de producción y mercadeo.

El Plan se propuso consolidar la alianza y asegurar entregas constantes y diversificadas al SLC, como un primer paso para después incorporarse al mercado regional. La alianza con SLC, sin embargo, permanece amenazada por la creciente competencia de otros productores que también se organizan para abastecer al Supermercado.

También se procuraría comercializar la producción de plántulas; el mercado local sobrepasa la oferta de COPRAHOR. Adicionalmente se planteaba la distribución de bienes de consumo a los socios y habitantes en general de las comunidades de Carreta Quebrada y Las Delicias.

Finalmente, COPRAHOR se propuso iniciar un nuevo negocio de comercialización de insumos agrícola en Carreta Quebrada, realizando gestiones de obtención de concesiones o crédito con casas comerciales distribuidoras (p. e. RAMAC, FORMUNICA) para comercializarlos en la comunidad, se invertiría en una pequeña bodega y se contrataría y capacitará a una persona para que brindar un buen servicio a los clientes. Sin embargo la venta a productores se realizaría al contado, para asegurar la liquidez del negocio hasta alcanzar la auto-sostenibilidad.

Eslabón de la transformación: El Plan se proponía modestamente elaborar encurtidos de chilotos y brindar servicios de maquila a Hortifruti en alianza con productores de otras zonas del país.

#### Desarrollo organizacional:

Productores de Carreta Quebrada fueron capacitados en temas del cooperativismo (2008). COPRAHOR fue asistida para la formulación de sus planes estratégicos y de negocios. En la sección de graduación y sostenibilidad más adelante se aborda estos temas.

#### Relaciones y alianzas con otros actores de la cadena

COPRAHOR ha establecido relaciones más directas con proveedores de servicios financieros y no financieros y proveedores de insumos, tales como FDL (crédito), Agritrade y FORMUNICA (insumos) y negociado convenios con organizaciones públicas (INTA, MAGFOR; IDR también ha apoyado a la Cooperativa) y de desarrollo (PROMIPAC, TechnoServe).

No obstante, COPRAHOR ha evitado establecer relaciones financieras formales con los bancos privados, como fue en el caso del proyecto de mecanización: *“Se anduvo tocando puertas en los bancos, después se aprobó en Banpro [un préstamo y] lo querían pasar a una financiera y allí iba hacer más caro. Entonces se decidió en una sesión con todos los socios, que teníamos los ahorros y que mejor se comprara de contado para no deberle a un banco”.*



El Plan estratégico también proponía el establecimiento de alianzas con universidades e instituciones proveedores de servicios de asistencia técnica, especialmente para el establecimiento de sistemas de riego (por goteo), y para la validación de nuevas tecnologías de producción se promoverían escuelas de campo (ECAS) de manera sostenible mediante la capitalización a partir de las ventas brutas y así establecer mas ECAS, hasta que fueran establecidas por cada productor individual.

### Empleo

COPRAHOR no cuenta con un gerente, pero contrata de manera permanente a una contadora y un técnico para la producción de plántulas, y de manera temporal (acopio y post cosecha) contrata mano de obra local: en promedio, en Las Delicias se contrata en 7 personas por entrega y en Carreta Quebrada 13, las cuales en su mayoría son mujeres. También se contrata a mujeres para la producción de plántulas. Cada año seleccionan a un socio como gestor de ventas que se encarga de manejar todos los pedidos del SLC y de asegurar el cumplimiento de los acuerdos comerciales. La adquisición de un tractor también implica la generación de empleo permanente y temporal (mas jornales para el procesamiento y de mano de obra de mujeres para las actividades de post cosecha de mayores volúmenes de producción, servicios de mantenimiento) adicional y al mantenimiento del empleo administrativo actual. Tal como lo señaló un miembro de la JD de COPRAHOR, *“Ha habido crecimiento en mano de obra, dando empleo a mucha gente desempleada en el 2005 que solo se dedicaban a la producción de maíz y frijol”*.

### Capacidades empresariales-administrativas y financieras

La cooperativa ha adquirido capacidades en la gestión de recursos ante organizaciones públicas, empresas privadas y ONG de desarrollo y goza de salud financiera. Los socios han mostrado siempre disponibilidad a pagar por los servicios que les provee su Cooperativa y de asumir el pago complementario de comisiones por servicios de asistencia agroempresarial.

### Gobernabilidad

COPRAHOR, cuenta con personalidad jurídica desde su inicio. Su JD ha sido funcional, y ha mantenido una buena relación con la gerencia. La Cooperativa cumple con sus obligaciones laborales, tributarias y/o financieras, aunque los conocimientos sobre estos temas por parte de de la JD y de los socios no es mucho. Aunque se cuenta con manuales administrativos y operativos, no se ponen en práctica y se necesita un mayor control gerencial de los procedimientos administrativos y del inventario. La contabilidad había sido recién actualizada cuando se formuló el Plan, aunque los estados financieros no han estado al día, lo que ha dificultado el acceso al crédito; el contador al principio estuvo a cargo de TecnoServer, luego se contrato a un profesional quien ahora ya es supervisado de manera directa únicamente por parte de la JD. Lo que ha hecho falta ha sido una estrategia empresarial y el Plan Estratégico mencionado venia a llenar ese vacío.

### Aspectos ambientales

El Plan Estratégico de COPRAHOR no planteaba una política ambiental o de desarrollo sostenible. Sin embargo, si se han promovido prácticas amigables con el medio ambiente, incluyendo la realización de un diagnóstico de producción más limpia y el uso racional de los recursos naturales, especialmente los hídricos (conservación); se cuenta además con una grúa de manejo del medio ambiente. La Cooperativa ha

pretendido concientizar sobre los efectos negativos (contaminación fuentes de agua, salud de personas expuestas) del uso inadecuado de los agroquímicos y comercializar únicamente aquellos aprobados por las regulaciones del país y registros en el EPA (EEUU). Por otra parte, el proyecto del tractor corría el riesgo de tener un impacto negativo (erosión excesiva y compactación) en los suelos; se consideró por lo tanto utilizar la metodología de Escuelas de Campo que ha sido implementada por TechnoServe y PROMIPAC.

### Relaciones comunitarias

La Cooperativa tiene un impacto positivo en las comunidades de Carreta Quebrada y Las Delicias, tanto mediante la generación de empleo local, especialmente para mujeres, como por la prestación de sus servicios a otros productores individuales no socios. Un miembro de la JD expresó: *“Si, el impacto se ha visto en la comunidad. Mayor empleo, la mejoría en las familias”*.

### Género:

COPRAHOR es una cooperativa de varones (97% de la membresía; solo una mujer es miembro del Consejo de Administración) que tiene el mérito de tener conciencia de género. La Cooperativa venían recibiendo capacitaciones de género por parte de TechnoServe y el tema era abordado de manera aislada. Según sus estatutos no existe discriminación de género para nuevos ingresos y contempla la igualdad de derechos para ocupar cargos directivos y administrativos de la organización.

A partir de haber sido planteado en el Plan Estratégico, COPRAHOR desarrolló en el 2010 su política de Género 2011-13, con el propósito de desarrollar capacidades institucionales (incluyendo mas miembros mujeres, seguimiento y evaluación) y del personal (capacitación), y de incorporar (visibilización, sensibilización y promoción) el enfoque como eje transversal. El documento de la Política es bastante integral, completo en términos de indicadores y supuestos y claramente dirigido a empoderar e incluir a las mujeres en los procesos de toma de decisión y en las actividades de COPRAHOR a diferentes niveles.

El diagnóstico elaborado para formular la Política demostró la existencia de diferentes interpretaciones el enfoque de género; pero en general existe en la Junta Directiva conciencia del tema y voluntad de impulsar más la equidad de género en sus familias y una participación mayor de la mujer en la toma de decisiones productivas, de acopio y comercialización.

El reto de una implementación efectiva de esta Política radica en que su implementación sea liderada por mujeres y en lograr una significativa integración de más mujeres en la cooperativa. Hasta el momento, COPRAHOR, aparte de generar más empleo temporal para mujeres (en acopio y producción de plántulas), ha contemplado una alianza con las productoras de la comunidad de Las Delicias que están asociadas a la Federación de Mujeres productoras del Campo (FEMUPROCAM), en la realización de planes conjuntos de producción escalonada.

### 5. Graduación, Sostenibilidad y Metodología de la Alianza de Aprendizaje (CATIE)

El concepto de graduación o transición a la autosuficiencia, ACORDAR lo define como un proceso de separación paulatina de las empresas cooperativas, de la asistencia del proyecto, es decir que el apoyo organizacional debería reducirse gradualmente a través del tiempo, en términos de recursos financieros, humanos y basados en el nivel

de madurez de cada grupo/cooperativa. ¿Fue así en el caso de COPRAHOR? A continuación se presenta una relectura crítica de los resultados del Auto-diagnostico con la metodología de la Alianza de Aprendizaje:

- i. Durante el período de ACORDAR solidificó la relación con un contacto que en realidad ya tenía desde 2005 (SLC) gracias al apoyo de TechnoServe y no estableció ningún otro contrato de venta; de hecho tampoco lo tiene con SLC, lo que es correctamente percibido de manera negativa por la JD de COPRAHOR: *“Estamos en desventaja en cuestiones de contrato. Deberíamos hacer contrato con La Colonia para establecernos”.*

Aunque la mayor parte de las ventas de COPRAHOR están dirigidas a un mercado diferenciado según las preferencias de compra de los supermercados, COPRAHOR aparenta más bien tener hoy en día una relación comercial externa muy vulnerable al depender de un solo comprador. Como expresó un miembro de la JD de COPRAHOR: *“El problema que hemos tenido es que tenemos un solo mercado selectivo que es el Supermercado La Colonia, entonces al tener un solo mercado y al haber sobreproducción, la tenemos que vender al mercado, y esto nos afecta cuando se bajan los precios en el mercado”.*

La relación establecida con SLC no es simétrica: SLC es un cliente clave para COPRAHOR, y ésta es un proveedor importante para SLC, pero éste tiene otros proveedores que podrían sustituir o reducir la cuota asignada a COPRAHOR en el mediano plazo con precios iguales o menores; SLC tiene más de ocho años de implementar una política de compra de bienes agrícolas a cooperativas agropecuarias y COPRAHOR es solo una de ellas, de tal manera que para el SLC *“La relación se da porque ellos vinieron a buscar a La Colonia para vender sus productos”.* La segunda opción de COPRAHOR es establecer, ejercitarse y fortalecer relaciones comerciales con intermediarios locales, otros mercados departamentales, abastecimiento a otros supermercados y/o de otros mercados nacionales (mayoreo), para disminuir su dependencia y vulnerabilidad, aun si vendiera a un menor precio. Esto, sin embargo, no ha sido una prioridad: el otro “enlace” con los mercados de Managua no es estable y la relación establecida con Hortifruti (también en el 2005) no continuó.

El SLC muestra una actitud propia de ganar-ganar: *“Como empresa le garantizamos un buen precio por su producción, pedidos y apoyo para desarrollar la compra, se le puede dar un adelanto por ejemplo o se le agiliza un pago”.* Sin embargo, el único factor formal y sólido que contribuye al mantenimiento de la “alianza” con SLC es la deuda del camión, una vez pagado, la vulnerabilidad de COPRAHOR se incrementará.

Tampoco se observa la existencia de alianzas estables con otras organizaciones de productores o cooperativas de segundo nivel, aunque si tiene relaciones con algunos proveedores de servicios e insumos.

No parece haber sido recomendable, desde el punto de vista de la sostenibilidad, que haber apoyado por largo tiempo las relaciones comerciales de la cooperativa con solo un gran comprador. Más bien resalta la prevalencia de la comercialización individual del producto de segunda (descartado por SLC) directamente por parte de los mismos productores. COPRAHOR no logra así vender mayores volúmenes negociando mejores condiciones y precios, un mayor margen de ganancia y por ende mayor capacidad de capitalización. Esto implica que, además de que no se está conociendo mejor el funcionamiento de otros segmentos del mercado de

hortalizas, se podría estar dando un cierto grado de falta de apropiación, compromiso y pertenencia de los socios con su cooperativa.

- ii. COPRAHOR no logró contar con un crédito formal con una entidad bancaria o micro financiera, tampoco en realidad estaba muy interesada en ello. El crédito que recibió fue otorgado por SLC para la adquisición del camión y para la prima del tractor ya descontarse de la venta de la producción. Aunque cuenta con documentación legal para poder solicitar créditos formales, esto en sí mismo no representa una política de acceso a crédito, la que tampoco fue planteada como tal en el Plan Estratégico 2010-13. La Cooperativa tampoco ha logrado movilizar a proveedores de servicios financieros para que atiendan en términos ventajosos a los productores asociados, ni ha logrado movilizar recursos financieros para proveer directamente servicios de crédito a sus asociados.

Es recomendable que los servicios de crédito (y financieros en general) para los productores individuales socios sean priorizados por el programa desde un inicio, para evitar que se genere una situación de vulnerabilidad financiera y económica frente a los proveedores de crédito en especie a la finalización del mismo, así como una consolidación de la dependencia de un solo gran comprador como fuente de crédito en especie.

- iii. La gobernabilidad de COPRAHOR ha sido fortalecida: tiene estatus legal, organigrama, manuales, cumple con sus obligaciones, cuenta con una estructura directiva y operativa completa, funcional y capacitada, practican la transparencia y la rotación de liderazgo e incluyen a una mujer en cargos directivos. Por otra parte, el hecho de que desde sus orígenes la Cooperativa fue promovida por TechnoServe, incluyendo la ampliación de su membresía con los productores de Las Delicias, naturalmente ha influido en la dirección de su desarrollo y en la administración de sus recursos y, por lo tanto, en sus resultados económicos, su contribución al mejoramiento de los ingresos de los hogares de las familias socias, en el desarrollo humano de sus asociados y asociadas, y en su sostenibilidad. Se reportaron unos pocos casos de insatisfacción expresado por la JD como son los del contador y el del sistema de riego con la asistencia técnica acompañante, los que dañaron la soberanía de consumidor del productor y la autonomía de la Cooperativa: *“Con los sistemas de riego estamos a media, porque no es el que necesariamente necesitábamos. En el que no estamos de acuerdo es que no los impusieron, no dieron opción. Los utilizamos pero no satisfactoriamente, sino por exigencia. Si ya los habíamos obtenidos, los teníamos que pagar.”*

En este sentido, es recomendable que los organismos de acompañamiento se desvinculen de la gobernanza de manera decidida y planificada, a fin de contribuir a la sostenibilidad de los logros alcanzados.

- iv. El indicador utilizado en el auto-diagnóstico de que si las cooperativas cuentan con activos de capital y de que si cuentan con un estado financiero actualizado y auditable, es muy insuficiente para medir la auto sostenibilidad financiera. La JD señala que *“.. [ACORDAR] antes se dedicaban a la asistencia técnica en las parcelas, pero en estos últimos años se dedicaron a lo empresarial, a ver la contabilidad. A partir que nos ayudaron con un consultor que nos puso la contabilidad al día, la cooperativa ha tomado un giro muy grande, porque ha habido mejoramiento de la cooperativa”*.

Sin embargo, no hay evidencia de que COPRAHOR es estable financieramente en el mediano-largo plazo en términos de la relación capital propio/pasivos y, a parte de contar con estados financieros auditables y manuales relevantes, no hay evidencia de que son analizados de manera regular. Este indicador fue evaluado muy positivamente sin tener sustento y además dejando de lado otros aspectos estratégicos contemplados en la guía de Autoevaluación del CATIE que ya ha sido validada.

- v. De la misma manera que en el caso anterior, el indicador de que si las cooperativas son rentables en sus operaciones productivas y de comercialización, definido en términos de que sus ingresos son mayores a sus egresos, es insuficiente. La relación entre utilidad neta y, respectivamente, valor de las ventas, activos y patrimonio, no es estimada. No hay evidencia que indique la sostenibilidad de COPRAHOR en términos de rentabilidad, aunque sí hay de que es capaz de mantener ingresos permanentes a precios más o menos estables (considerando factores externos inesperados) a lo largo del año lo que provee una base mínima para la sostenibilidad económica.

En este estudio se ha estimado (basado en el Plan de Negocios) que las utilidades netas anuales potenciales de COPRAHOR solamente por las actividades de comercialización implican aproximadamente US\$ 50 mensual por productor asociado, lo que significa que en términos individuales tendría un ingreso diario justo por debajo de la línea de la pobreza. Si se incluyen las otras actividades (plántulas y servicios) el potencial se incrementa a aproximadamente a US\$ 74/mes, a un nivel superior de la línea de la pobreza para el productos individual, no así para todos los miembros de su hogar. Sin embargo, cada productor todavía cuenta con los ingresos de sus ventas a la cooperativa los que, después de descontar sus costos de producción, tendría ingresos adicionales. En pocas palabras, COPRAHOR con el apoyo de ACORDAR está logrando contribuir a la superación de la pobreza de los hogares de los productores socios. Un miembro de la JD expresó que *“El impacto que hemos tenido luego de ser constituidos en el 2005 que sacamos personaduría jurídica, es mejorar los niveles de vida de cada socio y su familia”*.

- vi. No hay duda que COPRAHOR ha desarrollado una orientación estratégica y empresarial gracias al apoyo de ACORDAR, lo que se puede observar con el cumplimiento bastante satisfactoria del indicador de contar con un plan estratégico actualizado y en implementación, con visión, misión y líneas estratégicas, habiendo sido formulado con un aceptable grado de participación; se cuenta además con otros planes de negocio, etc. La JD expresa y valora con entusiasmo este avance: *“La cooperativa no tenía su visión ni su misión, y hoy contamos con ellas. No teníamos plan estratégico, ni plan de negocios y hoy lo tenemos. .... Tenemos manual de crédito, y otros manuales. Son como 5 manuales. Tenemos un plan de autosuficiencia”*.

Según el documento de Evaluación del Proceso de Graduación, COPRAHOR apenas logró graduarse con un puntaje de 3.58, fundamentalmente gracias a un 75% de avance en el ámbito de la organización estratégica empresarial en el periodo 2010-12. Estos resultados reflejarían 7 años de apoyo que recibido de TechnoServe, desde el 2005. Sin embargo, la revisión de la evidencia no sustenta esas estimaciones. En todo caso, hace falta la aplicación cabal del Manual Técnico No. 100 del CATIE y entonces valorar mejor la graduación de COPRAHOR como una empresa cooperativa rural sostenible.

## 6. Conclusiones y Recomendaciones

El caso estudiado de la experiencia de COPRAHOR muestra lo siguiente:

1. La enorme importancia que ha tenido el apoyo sostenido de asistencia técnica externa, desde su fundación, incluyendo apoyo para su sostenibilidad y la toma de conciencia de ello por parte de la JD de COPRAHOR: *“Anteriormente TechnoServe nos había dado todo donado, nos habíamos acostumbrado y no nos dejábamos una retención”*. Es importante que la política de rotación en el liderazgo asegure que esos valores, principios y habilidades permanezcan al nivel de la JD.
2. Este apoyo enfrenta el reto típico de auto-limitarse su incidencia sobre la decisiones de la Cooperativa y/o productores individuales (como consumidores finales); estos retos se vuelven mucho más manejables, sin embargo, cuando se cuenta previamente con metodologías de desarrollo de capacidades empresariales de la calidad que tienen las del CIAT y CATIE.
3. La aplicación de la metodología de autoevaluación no fue totalmente coherente con la validada por el CIAT, lo que facilitó una “graduación” a un nivel mínimo sin tener evidencia más relevante que la estableciera. Esto corre el riesgo de generar auto-complacencia en aspectos delicados para la sostenibilidad de COPRAHOR. La metodología actual debe modificarse para asegurar más rigurosidad en la auto-evaluación.
4. No obstante, es muy evidente que COPRAHOR ha establecido una fuerte base de desarrollo organizacional, visión empresarial estratégica, equipamiento, experiencia en negociar con un gran comprador y de conciencia de género (en una cooperativa formada prácticamente solo por hombres), la que le ha permitido reinsertarse en mejores términos en la cadena de valor de las hortalizas y generar beneficios para la comunidad. En este sentido se puede aseverar que COPRAHOR ha estado siguiendo un proceso de transición a la sostenibilidad.
5. COPRAHOR, aunque no ha establecido relaciones comerciales formales (contractuales) con SLC, si ha logrado ganarse el grado de confianza necesario como para que las relaciones sean efectivas y mutuamente provechosas y se mantengan así en el mediano plazo.
6. Después de al menos 7 años de apoyo externo, 5 de ellos por ACORDAR, COPRAHOR se ha desarrollado en muchos aspectos, pero es todavía vulnerable en el aspecto comercial, e incluso en el climático. Tiene sin embargo la capacidad (creada con el apoyo de ACORDAR) de reducir sustancialmente esa vulnerabilidad, si se lo propone.



## **Annex 8 Statement of Work**

### **FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF “ACORDAR” PROJECT**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

USAID/Nicaragua requests the services of an external consultant to carry out a final performance evaluation of the Project entitled “Alliance to Create Opportunities for Rural Development through Agro-enterprise Relationships” (ACORDAR Project) implemented under Cooperative Agreement No. 524-A-00-07-00015-00. ACORDAR is a Global Development Alliance (GDA) activity that began on September 13, 2007. The initial cooperative agreement was for 30 months, thus scheduled to end on March 30, 2010. The activity was later extended for an additional 30 months, constituting a second phase that began on April 1, 2010 and is now scheduled to end on September 30, 2012. The activity is part of USAID/Nicaragua’s Economic Growth Office (DO2). At present the Agreement Officer Representative (AOR) for the program is Georgina Melendez.

USAID’s Alliance to Create Opportunities for Rural Development through Agro-Enterprise Relationships (ACORDAR) program is the Mission’s flagship agricultural activity and is implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and a core consortium composed of Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Aldea Global Jinotega (AG) and Technoserve (TNS). ACORDAR is a Global Development Alliance activity requiring leveraged funding from non-federal sources. USAID is contributing about \$19 Million. As of September 30, 2011, ACORDAR partners have leveraged \$23.7 million in cash and in-kind contributions. Public and private sector consortium members include 25 municipal governments in Northern Nicaragua that are actively involved in the implementation of the activity in their territories and provide leveraged resources to the program.

#### **II. PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION DATA**

1. Program Title: Alliance to Create Opportunities for Rural Development through Agroenterprise Relationships (ACORDAR)
2. Cooperative Agreement Number: 524-A-00-07-00015-00
3. Program Dates: September 13, 2007 through September 30, 2012
4. Program Funding: \$19,003,212
5. Implementing Organization: Catholic Relief Services, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
6. Agreement Officer Representative (AOR): Georgina Melendez
7. Reference Period for Evaluation: September 13, 2007 through September 30, 2012
8. Expected Start date for Evaluation: Mid-August 2012
9. Expected Completion date for Evaluation: Mid-November 2012

#### **III. BACKGROUND**

The overall goal of ACORDAR is to help farmers improve competitiveness and productivity, and take advantages of market opportunities by helping them sell in local, regional, and international markets. It directly supports over 7,000 small holder



producers by promoting technology transfer, improved productive infrastructure and inputs, improved marketing, value added processing, and enhanced linkages along the value chain. The ultimate objective of the activity is to help increase income and reduce poverty among small holder producer households.

The ACORDAR Project is currently working with over 100 cooperative organizations in ten provinces in approximately 50 municipalities nationwide. It is heavily concentrated in the Departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega, Estelí, Nueva Segovia, and Madriz. The main value chain crops promoted by the program are fruits and vegetables (including roots, tubers, tomatoes, potatoes, green peppers, and plantains), beans, coffee and cocoa. The introduction of new farming technologies such as irrigation, new seed varieties, production of seedlings in greenhouses; technical assistance for improved crop management, sustainable agricultural production and best agricultural practices; providing access to production and post-harvest facilities; linking farmers with buyers and markets, trade capacity building, market information, business management skills are key components of the program.

#### Results Framework

The results package for the ACORDAR program is as follows:

Goal: 7,000 impoverished rural producers from 50 municipalities increase their incomes, secure permanent employment, and strengthen their trade capacities through the development of value chains in alliance with municipal governments and the private sector.

Objective 1: Small and medium scale farmers apply successful and institutionalized tools and processes for the development of production and agricultural markets.

IR 1.1: Small and medium scale farmers enjoy increasing levels of income and employment as a result of the application of successful and institutionalized tools and processes for the development of production and agricultural markets.

Objective 2: Enterprises of small and medium scale farmers, in alliance with the public and private sectors, strengthen their institutional and human capacities.

IR 2.1: The farmers' associations supported by the program achieve financial stability and construct a basis for the sustainable delivery of services to their members or they have a plan to achieve this.

Objective 3: Expanded water resources make it possible for small scale farmers to experience ongoing growth in their production and management of markets

IR 3.1: The increase in water resources provides a reliable supply of potable water for producers in urban and rural areas and for agribusinesses.

#### IV. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The final evaluation will assess the impact, effectiveness, and success of the ACORDAR program, its interventions, and its overall approach to agricultural development, growth, and income generation. In general, it will evaluate the extent to which the program has contributed in advancing its stated goal, objectives, and intermediate results. Furthermore, it will assess the effectiveness and success of the program in key





areas and objectives, such as: improving agricultural productivity, adoption of more sustainable environmental practices, inclusive value chain development, small business enterprise development, strengthening of producer cooperatives and associations, increased participation by women, and improved marketing of crops by increasing participation of small-holder producers in national, regional, and international markets. The assessment will also seek to answer a central question -- to what extent has the program contributed in increasing income and employment and reducing poverty in target areas and among targeted groups?

Results and impact will largely be measured in terms of the indicators and targets at the strategic objective and intermediate results level and changes in key program indicators based on the pre-intervention levels established through baseline data and other sources of data and information. In assessing more subjective aspects related to effectiveness, performance, and impact of the program, the evaluator is expected to apply his own judgment, based on his own program evaluation, agricultural and development related experience and knowledge.

Moreover, the evaluator is expected to comply with new USAID's Evaluation Policy, which can be found in <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation>. The evaluation's findings, lessons learned, recommendations and conclusions will provide USAID with an analytical foundation for the design of future Economic Growth Office activities in the area of agricultural development with a focus on increasing rural income and employment, and poverty reduction.

## V. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Specifically, the evaluation is expected to:

### 1. Evaluate

- a. the programs overall technical approach and how effective it has been in addressing stated problems and in reaching its objectives and expected results
- b. the long-term sustainability of USAID investments made in infrastructure, capacity building, public-private partnerships, improved marketing and buyer relations, and other areas
- c. the selection of direct beneficiaries of the program, including their general profile, income, demographics, etc. Was the selection of beneficiaries conducive to overall poverty reduction and income and employment creation? Assess whether it would be more practical to reduce or increase the number of direct beneficiaries? What types of interventions would be more appropriate under a scenario with a smaller and with a larger number of beneficiaries? Had program beneficiaries been recipients of assistance under previous CRS programs?
- d. the program's leverage funding and cost-sharing components? What has been the impact of leveraged resources in the overall programs effectiveness? What future changes would you make in terms of leverage funding requirements?
- e. the cooperative organization approach that presumably allows for reaching a larger number of producers through more coordinated interventions, including technical assistance, revolving credit lines, small-scale and large-scale infrastructure – how effective has this model been in helping producers better market their crops and



better source their inputs? Is the cooperative model in Nicaragua an effective platform for advancing the interests of small farmers?

2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the program in:

a. reducing poverty and food insecurity in the focus regions, taking into consideration factors such as the income effects on direct beneficiaries, the types of direct beneficiaries (income levels), and the potential secondary or multiplier effects on the rest of the population in the regions. How significant were secondary or multiplier effects on income and employment considering the types of interventions and the design of this program?

b. facilitating transactions and creating backward linkages between end-markets, processors, and small-holder and low-income producers

c. developing and better integrating the focus value chains in a way that they become more competitive and benefit as many people as possible through income and employment generation. Comment on the selection of specific value chains. Should the inclusion of any other value chain products have been considered?

3. Identify those specific program interventions that have been more successful and/or had a greater impact on beneficiaries. Explain why.

4. Review and evaluate progress toward meeting the programs objectives and indicator targets – provide recommendations regarding the programs M&E system, including the data collection processes, the methodology for construction of indicator variables, the indicator selection and how well indicators capture the program’s effectiveness in meeting its objectives and expected results.

5. Analyze:

a. the advantages and disadvantages of the program’s geographical focus. What was the effect of having the program spread out over such a large area? Would it be advisable or practical to narrow the geographical focus? Explain why or why not?

b. overall lessons learned and provide recommendations for a future activity regarding the program’s overall approach, types of interventions, types of beneficiaries, value chain selection, private-public partnerships, and other aspects related to the design and implementation of the program.

Gender questions:

a. How did the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household (for example, roles in decision-making and different access to and control over resources and services) affected the work undertaken?

b. How did the anticipated results of the work affected women and men differently?

6. Provide insight as to how USAID can be a “thought leader” in order to enhance dialogue with other USAID and interagency partners, other donors and the private sector in order to be a catalyst for positive change in the area of economic development in the north central region. Comment on how USAID’s coordination role, expertise in creating public-private partnerships, ability to employ science and



technology, and mobilizing community support can enhance stakeholder impact while minimizing the cost to USAID.

## VI. METHODOLOGY

As part of the evaluation, the contractor is expected to:

- Review documents and databases
- Conduct quantitative analysis
- Conduct field interviews and focus groups
- Review case studies
- Other valid methodologies proposed by the evaluator

It is expected that the contractor will spend considerable time in the field conducting interviews and collecting data and information regarding the programs' implementation.

The following documents from the ACORDAR program will be available to the contractor to provide the background and framework for the Final Performance Evaluation:

1. ACORDAR proposal
2. Cooperative Agreement and modifications
3. Program baseline data
4. Program's M&E database
5. Program Quarterly reports and Work Plans
6. ACORDAR's midterm evaluation
7. Site Visit trip reports
8. Regulation 216 documentation
9. Other past evaluation reports of USAID-funded programs related to grantee.
10. Any other information deemed relevant by USAID and the contractor

## VII. DELIVERABLES

There are four deliverables that will need to be presented in compliance with USAID's Evaluation Policy:

- A. Evaluation Plan – After initial document review and meetings with key USAID/Nicaragua staff, the contractor will submit a work/methodology plan, including proposed interviews, field visits and timeline to completion of the final report (10 pages).
- B. Draft Evaluation Report – The contractor will submit a draft report for review by USAID/Nicaragua. Guidelines for the report format are found in Attachment 2.
- C. Debriefing with USAID – The contractor will make a formal presentation to USAID staff of the findings contained in the Draft Evaluation Report through a Power Point Presentation and feedback should be subsequently incorporated in the report.
- D. Final Evaluation Report – The contractor will complete and submit the Final Report that incorporates USAID's comments and suggestions (40 pages).

Deliverables must be submitted in both hard copy and electronic form to:

Georgina Melendez

ACORDAR AOR

USAID/Nicaragua



Km. 5.5 Carretera Sur  
Managua, Nicaragua  
gemelendez@usaid.gov

#### VIII. TIMELINE

To complete the required deliverables, it is estimated that a maximum of 90 work days will be required. A notional schedule is included below for reference:

Stage Task Number of days Planning and Preparation

- Review program documentation
- Interview USAID/Nicaragua

Technical Personnel 4

Develop Evaluation Plan 1

Field Work Meetings in Managua

Field Visits 25 – 30

Data Analysis Analyze data gathered from field trips and key informant interviews 15 – 25

Reporting

Write Draft Evaluation Report and

Prepare Power Point Presentation 10 – 15

Write Final Evaluation Report 10 - 15

Total 65 - 90

The consultancy is expected to begin Mid-August 2012 and a final report submitted before Mid- November 2012.

#### IX. SCHEDULING AND LOGISTICS

It is expected that the evaluator will contract an assistant to provide support with logistics, documentation, and other tasks as necessary. The contractor must provide his or her own laptop with appropriate software, office space, and other supplies for completing the order. Costs for lodging and meals while outside in the field are limited to the U.S. Government allowable local per diem rates (per diem will only be paid for field trips outside of Managua). Contractor is responsible for all travel costs within Nicaragua. Should travel to the countryside be required, please note that it is US Embassy policy that rental vehicles must include a local driver.

USAID will provide overall direction to the contractor, identify key documents, and assist with the execution of the Evaluation Plan. It will assist with the scheduling of meetings with key stakeholders. The contractor is responsible for scheduling other meetings in the course of the evaluation exercise and informing USAID in advance of those meetings. USAID can assist with arranging visits to sites.

USAID personnel will be available to the team for advice on sources and technical issues before and during the evaluation exercise.

#### X. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payment schedule will be negotiated with the offeror at the moment of the award.

#### XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



All deliverables must be approved by the Activity Manager before payment can be made by the Controller's Office, USAID/Nicaragua.

## XII. LOCATION OF WORK

The majority of the work will take place outside of the premises of USAID/Nicaragua Mission in Managua, Nicaragua. The contractor must provide his or her own laptop with appropriate software. Contractor is also responsible for in-country transportation. Should travel to the countryside be required, please note that it is US Embassy policy that rental vehicles must include a local driver.

## XIII. REQUIREMENTS

- 10 years of extensive experience in the design, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of agriculture and agribusiness development programs
- Master's degree in economics, agricultural development, or related fields of study
- At least 7 years of experience in evaluation and statistical analysis
- At least 7 years of experience working in the Latin America Region, preferably in Nicaragua
- Professional level fluency in Spanish and English

## XIV. REQUIREMENTS OF OFFER

Interested offerors for this purchase order should include in their proposal a biographical data sheet (USAID Form 1420-17) found at <http://inside.usaid.gov/forms/formsnumeric.html> and curriculum vitae as well as a budget for the expected level of effort to complete the deliverables for this purchase order. Since this is a purchase order, payment will be based on submission of approved deliverables.

## XV. BRANDING STRATEGY

USAID's framework legislation, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, section 641, requires that all programs under the Foreign Assistance Act be identified appropriately overseas as "American Aid". Further since 9/11, America's foreign assistance programs have been more fully integrated into the United States' National Security Strategy. On January 10, 2007, USAID issued a revised policy, ADS 320, which provides agency procedures for the branding and marking of USAID-financed assistance. Section 320.3.2 provides detailed information related to acquisition. To comply with the regulations and policies related to branding and marking, the Contractor shall develop and submit to USAID/Nicaragua for review and approval a Branding Implementation that shall address the following key elements of this branding strategy:

- Naming and positioning: USAID's preference is that activities under this Purchase Order

will not assume a public identity independent of that of USAID so that stakeholders, intended beneficiaries of program activities, and the general public in Nicaragua recognize that the work is made possible through the cooperation of the American People through USAID.

- How the materials and communications products funded by USAID will be positioned:



All program materials and communications products financed under this Purchase Order must include the USAID identity (See [www.usaid.gov/branding](http://www.usaid.gov/branding)) and will have exclusive USAID branding and marking. In some exceptional occasions, when the Contractor or USAID/Nicaragua judge that including the USAID identity might not be in the best interest of the US Government, USAID could authorize in writing the no inclusion of the USAID identity through the approval of an exception (See ADS 320.3.2.5).

- Level of Visibility: USAID understands that the primary audience of the Contract is USAID/Nicaragua. All the materials shall comply with USAID requirements for intellectual property and shall be properly identified with the USAID branding.
- Other Organizations to be acknowledged: N/A

The Branding Implementation Plan: shall be prepared and submitted for USAID approval in response to the Branding Strategy, per USAID ADS 320 requirements. The Branding Implementation Plan shall specifically address Branding Strategy requirements as follows:

- How to incorporate the message, “This assistance is from the American people,” in communications and materials directed to beneficiaries or provide an explanation if this message is not appropriate or possible.
- How to publicize the program or activity in Nicaragua and a description of the communication tools to be used including but not limited to:

1. Reports
2. Site Visits
3. Success stories
4. Testimonials
5. Professional photography
6. The key milestones or opportunities anticipated to generate awareness that the activity is from the American people, or an explanation if this is not appropriate or possible. Such milestones may be linked to specific points in time, such as the beginning or end of a program or to an opportunity to showcase publications or other materials, research findings or program success.

Marking Plan: The Contractor shall submit for USAID approval a Marking Plan per USAID ADS 320.3.2.3 requirements, enumerating the public communications, commodities, program materials, and other items that visibly bear or will be marked with the USAID Identity. The Spanish-language logo should be used for Spanish-language communications/materials available at [www.usaid.gov/branding](http://www.usaid.gov/branding).

The Marking Plan may include requests for exceptions to marking requirements to be approved by USAID. See ADS 320.3.2.5. Contract deliverables to be marked with USAID identity must follow design guidance for color, type and layout in the Graphic Standards Manual which can be found at [http://www.usaid.gov/branding/USAID\\_Graphic\\_Standards\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/branding/USAID_Graphic_Standards_Manual.pdf). Please include samples of visual marking as relevant; for instance, a mock-up of publication covers and back pages.

The Marking Plan shall address the following contract deliverables or performance requirements:

- a) public communications financed by USAID that are print products must prominently display the USAID Identity;



- b) public communications financed by USAID that are audio, visual or electronic must prominently display the USAID Identity, including PowerPoint and other program-related presentations;
- c) studies, plans, tools, training plans, simulation models, reports, publications, Web sites, and all informational and promotional products not authored, reviewed, or edited by USAID must contain the following provision: “This study/report/Web site (specify) is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this (Specify) are the sole responsibility of (name of organization) and not necessarily reflect the views of USAID of the United States Government”. The translation in Spanish is “Est(e/a) [especificar: publicación, video, sitio Web u otro producto de información] es posible gracias al apoyo del Pueblo de los Estados Unidos a través de la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional (USAID). El contenido de este (especificar) es responsabilidad exclusiva de (nombre de la organización y autor) y el mismo no necesariamente refleja la perspectiva de USAID ni del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos de América”. It is important to note that USAID/Nicaragua uses the disclaimer in two different situations 1) all the documents listed at the beginning of this point per ADS 320.3.2.4 e.; and/or 2) per discretion of the USAID/COTR.
- d) events financed by USAID contracts must prominently display the USAID Identity including but not limited to: training, courses, conferences, seminars, briefings, workshops, press conferences, other public meetings and activities, and invitations, press releases, media material, handouts associated with these events that are produced under USAID contract<sup>21</sup>;
- e) USAID reserves the right to request pre-production review of USAID-funded public communications and program materials for compliance with USAID graphic standards and the approved Marking Plan. Exceptions to Marking: As detailed in ADS 320.3.2.5, there are exceptions to contract marking requirements. In such exceptional cases, when the program or USAID/Nicaragua determines that including the USAID identity might not be in the best interest of USAID or if deemed inappropriate for the reasons listed in the aforementioned ADS, the contractor will seek authorization from USAID, in writing, for approval through a waiver in line with regulations from ADS 320.3.2.6. USAID requests that the offeror prepares a list of anticipated exceptions that the Program considers are necessary in accordance with ADS 320.3.2.6.

#### XVI. CONSULTANT PAY CAP

The salary for local consultants is capped at the maximum rate in the Local Compensation Plan

(LCP) for the U.S. Embassy personnel. The LCP is hereby provided as reference:

Annual Basic Salary Rates for Locally Engaged Staff (Córdoba)

Clerical personnel: C\$ 87,143 - 194,074

Administrative personnel: C\$ 157,679 - 367,268

Professional personnel low-level: C\$ 290,214 - 464,346

Professional personnel mid-level: C\$ 348,896 - 686,633

Professional personnel high-level: C\$ 623,683 - 1,189,623

[END OF STATEMENT OF WORK]

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<sup>21</sup> All media contact, including but not limited to press conferences, press releases, media advisories, and other media matters must be reviewed and approved by USAID COTR.