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

**Quarterly Report**  
**(February-April, 2000)**

USAID/RFSUNY/NNA  
USAID Contract No. 524-C-00-00-00032-00  
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June 1, 2000

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

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

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

This quarterly report presents the advances made in the above project during the three month period from February 1 through April 30, 2000. Reference is made to the RFSUNY contract Statement of Work (Appendix 1) as well as the Year 1 Work Plan (Appendix 2). Reporting on SUNY/IDG's activities is organized by major goal areas and activities as laid out in the Statement of Work in the above referenced contract. Since SUNY/IDG's proposed goals are ambitious and are designed to address a wide range of issues in Nicaraguan legislative practices, some areas are in full swing while other have not yet begun (the Statement of Work and Year 1 Work Plan stagger activities over 33 months). A report on funds spent on each of the three activity areas during the past fiscal quarter (February and March, 2000) is also attached (Appendix 3), along with a report from SUNY/IDG's Information Technology (IT) consultant based in Managua (Appendix 4).

*Administrative.* The SUNY/IDG project continues to be housed at Reparto los Robles #317 in Managua and maintains office space for the Chief of Party, Guillermo Garcia, Information Technology Consultant, Rodolfo Calderon, Administrative and Budget Consultant, Ernesto Garcia, and Project Secretary, Marlyn Jerez. In addition to several Junior Programmers (computer science students eligible to join NNA staff in the future), thanks to increased working space the project office also houses the Legislative Internship Program and the Constituent Services Unit. LIP Coordinator Federico Rostran began on May 15 and work space for both the LIP and CRU is being equipped. USAID CO was granted to transfer all equipment acquired under the previous contract (#524-C-00-97-00031-00) to the current ISCP Program.

Project Director Anne Brophy Chetwynd and Project Assistant Tom Van Alstyne manage and backstop the project from the SUNY/IDG home office in Albany, New York. Mr. Van Alstyne visited the project in early March for one week and met with USAID, Assembly counterparts, the NNA Modernization Committee, various civil society organizations, representatives from Nicaraguan universities and other individuals. In April, Dr. Ernesto Rodríguez, Director of Protocol, International Relations and Press for the NNA, was named by the President of the Assembly as the official Assembly counterpart to coordinate the implementation of ISCP Program activities. In May, the Chief of Party and IT consultant made a presentation on legislative information systems to legislators at the Congress of Ecuador.

The composition of the NNA's Modernization Committee has changed somewhat in recent months, although not in a detrimental way vis á vis the ISCP Program. Dr. Guillermo Selva and Dr. Silvio Calderón have left the committee (the former has moved on to become a judge in the Supreme Court while the latter has become a judge in the Supreme Electoral Council). New members are Dr. Luis Urbina Noguera and Dr. Alcalá Blandón. Also, with the untimely passing of committee member Ing. José Cuadra in 1999, Dr. Pablo Sierra was named as his replacement. The Modernization Committee, with whom SUNY/IDG has held four work meetings during the first quarter, is constituted as follows:

*Modernization Committee of the Nicaraguan National Assembly, April, 2000*

Dr. Iván Escobar Fornos, President of the Assembly and President of the Modernization Committee, *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista*, Department of Managua

Dr. Leopoldo Navarro Bermúdez, Secretary of the Modernization Committee, *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista*, Department of Managua

Dra. María Lourdes Bolaños, *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, National Deputy

Dr. Jorge Samper, *Movimiento Renovador Sandinista*, Department of Managua

Dr. Luis Urbina Noguera, *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista* Department of Granada

Dr. Pablo Sierra, *Alianza Liberal*, Department of Chontales

Dr. Alcalá Blandón

*Contract administration-general.* The subject contract was awarded on the basis of activity budgets corresponding to the three main goal areas. The activity budgets have

been broken down into program years 1 and 2 (and optional period). A work plan for Year 1 was prepared and submitted to USAID on March 15, 2000. This document outlines what SUNY/IDG hopes to achieve in the first year of the program (February, 2000 to January, 2001). CTO concurrence was obtained for home office travel to Nicaragua in March and for home office, Chief of Party and participant travel to Washington, D.C. and Virginia for meetings and conference in June as detailed below. The financial report by activity (Fiscal Quarter 2 of 2000) reflects that SUNY/IDG's utilization rate was approximately 37% in February, 2000 and 82% in March, 2000 of the projected level (overall consumption rate of 60%). While not adversely affecting the program, this rate is due to delays in signing the subject contract in February, 2000, as well as to contingency plans to limit spending due to concerns about obligated funding in FY 2001. Subject to consultation with USAID, it is expected that the consumption rate in the coming fiscal quarter will remain between 80-95% of the projected budget.

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

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

Activities:

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

**1.1 Legislative Internship Program (LIP).** This unit is one of two key components of the ISCP Program, and is related to various other ISCP activities. The objective is to create a non-partisan and neutral research service that produces background studies, involving (in the short and medium term) qualified professionals serving as mentors and university students who are finishing coursework in fields related to the legislative process.

*Location and set-up.* The Legislative Internship Program was ideally going to be located in the Assembly, but no appropriate space was available. SUNY/IDG opted to maximize use of its project office by having the property owner enclose additional work space to accommodate the LIP coordinator, mentors and interns. The LIP will therefore be housed at the project office during the initial phase of the ISCP Program (Year 1 and beyond) and the Assembly's support of and identification with this externally located initiative will be key. The SUNY/IDG project office has equipped the work space with necessary furniture to accommodate the new unit's staff. With this and the other new unit (CRU), the number of people working at the SUNY/IDG project office (NNA satellite office) will more than triple.

*LIP Coordinator, Mentors and Interns.* In March, the Chief of Party sought prospective individuals to head this unit, interviewed a series of candidates<sup>1</sup> for the LIP coordinator position in April and transmitted the results of the evaluation to the NNA Modernization Committee's Secretary Dr. Leopoldo Navarro and to the SUNY/IDG home office. While SUNY/IDG was recently in the process of formalizing this new hire, the selected candidate, Dra. Alcira Irías Molina, declined the position in order to remain with her current employer (GTZ, a German development agency). The Chief of Party has contacted other candidates to fill this position immediately. In building a working relationship with the academic community in Nicaragua, the Chief of Party has met with the following individuals to explain the LIP initiative and obtain institutional support as well as the participation of students and faculty: Dr. Francisco Valladares of *Universidad Autónoma de Nicaragua/Leon (UNAN)*, Dra. Manuela Knapp de Aguilar of *Universidad Americana (UAM)*, Vice-Rector Dr. Helio Montenegro of *UAM*, Dr. Roberto Zarruk, Vice-Rector of the *Universidad Centroamericana (UCA)*, Dr. Luis Velásquez, Dean of the *Universidad Thomas More*, as well as Dr. Patrick Werner of the *Universidad de Mobile*. In March and April, meetings were specifically held to explore the availability of qualified students in their last years of university study in fields related to legislative work to serve as interns (researchers assigned to requested studies), as well as the availability of faculty members or other experts with legislative experience and know-how to serve as LIP mentors (supervise and support the research process). The universities have indicated the possibility of offering professors as mentors at no charge to the ISCP Program.

**1.2 Database of Local and International Experts to Draft Reports and Testify Before Committees.** This activity aims to create the above database which will allow Deputies to identify and consult experts in diverse areas. In the meetings with university representatives mentioned in Activity 1.1 above, the Chief of Party formally requested each institution to collaborate in the creation of such a database. Diverse contacts at each university are consulting internally and will provide SUNY/IDG with a list of potential experts and a short biography on each, and this process may provide a type of "think tank" support to the NNA. In the next month (June, 2000), SUNY/IDG will hire a local consultant to accelerate this activity and publish a draft database.

**1.3 Intensive Training for NNA Deputies and Staff in Legislative Bill-Drafting and Budget Analysis.** Once the experts have been identified and contacted, an emphasis on Deputy training will be made. This will enable Deputies to have the necessary background in drafting and presenting legislation. These content areas were reinforced throughout the recent visit by several members of the NNA Modernization Committee to the Law Library and Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. These same areas were discussed in detail at various points in the conference in

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<sup>1</sup> The candidates selected in order of priority were Dra. Alcira Irías Molina, Lic. Juan Marcos García and Lic. Oscar R. Escobar Lacayo.

Virginia. The Chief of Party requested that the three Deputies who attended the conference give a presentation to the Modernization (and other) Committee(s) upon their return in order to restate and highlight the importance of improving such everyday legislative resources that strengthen the body as a whole. Consistent with the Year 1 Work Plan, during the next quarter an assessment of these areas will be conducted by SUNY/IDG with the assistance of an international expert, staff will be identified for future trainer positions and a training plan will be presented to the Assembly. The project will also utilize the intellectual resources of the larger, 64 campus SUNY system in this respect. *INIFOM*. Training for 4 NNA Deputies was recently provided at the International Seminar on Fiscal Decentralization organized by the German development agency GTZ/FODES and *INIFOM (Instituto de Fomento Municipal)* on May 29 and 30, 2000. Presenters were Drs. Gonzalo Espitia and Gabriel Aghón.

**1.4 Civil Society Organization (CSO) Directory.** In order to take steps to create this directory, the Chief of Party has consulted with NDC (Centro Nicaraguense para el Desarrollo), an NGO that is coordinating a significant USAID-sponsored NGO-strengthening initiative. Additionally, SUNY/IDG has several lists of CSOs and NGOs and is developing a simple format and method of updating same in order to show results in this area soon. The directory will support legislative research, public hearings, expert consultation on specific bills by NNA committees, and the outreach activities for Deputies and civic education programs run by CSOs. To reiterate, the directory is being designed as a user-friendly guide to encourage the Assembly to consult with diverse civil society groups on legislative issues, and will be distributed inside and outside the Assembly.

**1.5 Deputy Orientation Program in 2001.** Although this activity is not scheduled to be in full swing until the next quarter, SUNY/IDG has assembled various materials on this topic, including those obtained at the recent USAID conference below (Activity 1.6). In June, 2000, the Chief of Party, along with the Modernization Committee, will present the Spanish version of the Year 1 Work Plan to the *Junta Directiva* of the NNA and a basic agreement as to this component can then be explored. SUNY/IDG is already considering the following consultants to use in this area: Juan Bonnefoy (National Congress of Chile), Alfonso Ferrufino (FUNDAPPAC, Bolivia) and James Kent (Marist College, NY).

**1.6 International Conference on Legislative Strengthening; Study Tours for Deputies and Professional Staff.** *Visit to Library of Congress (LC), Washington, D.C. (June 5, 2000).* In coordination with travel to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Legislative Strengthening (USAID/Center for Democracy and Governance), three NNA Deputies along with the Chief of Party, USAID CTO and the SUNY/IDG Project Assistant spent a full day at the U.S. Library of Congress. Of particular relevance to the ISCP Program, meetings were

arranged to learn about a versatile, public bill-tracking system (THOMAS), organization and functions of the LC Law Library, criteria for Nicaragua's possible membership in the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN), exchange agreements between the NNA's *Javier Avilés* Legislative Library and the LC (including book and microfilm exchanges), research procedures and products of the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the background and methods of neutral, non-partisan legislative research, and other perspectives on this independent research service that serves the U.S. Congress. The Nicaraguan Deputies were enthusiastic about these subject areas, were inquisitive as to their applicability to the Nicaraguan context, and received copious information about the relationship between a legal/legislative library and informed legislative process. This visit constituted the revival of the relationship between technical departments in the two institutions, and follow-on activities should occur such as short term consultancies and training in Nicaragua offered by LC professionals, exchange activities to strengthen and update bibliographical resources and membership in GLIN.

*2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Legislative Strengthening (USAID/Center for Democracy and Governance).* Due to flooding in Mozambique, the USAID-sponsored 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Legislative Strengthening scheduled for February, 2000 was canceled and rescheduled for June 5-8, 2000 at Wintergreen, Virginia. The ISCP Program supported the attendance of NNA Deputies Dr. Leopoldo Navarro (PLC), Dra. María Lourdes Bolaños (FSLN) and Dr. Luis Urbina (PLC), Chief of Party Guillermo García and home office Project Assistant Tom Van Alstyne. Traveling with the delegation from Nicaragua was Michael Eddy from USAID/Nicaragua. At the conference, Dra. Bolaños was a presenter in the session entitled "Roles NGOs Play in Representing Citizen Interests," while Mr. Eddy was the session's moderator. Mr. García was a presenter in the session entitled "Technology and Representation," and discussed the advances made in Peru and Nicaragua in technology as it relates to the legislative process. The above six individuals attended various sessions of the conference (a conference outline is attached as Appendix 5) and exchanged experiences with roughly 150 legislators and development professionals representing 31 countries. Given the enthusiasm expressed by the NNA Deputies during this trip, the unique value of study tours and conferences away from the subject country's political context was again proven.

*Study Tours to Guatemala and Mexico.* At the recent conference, both the Chief of Party and home office staff were able to discuss in person, with the responsible parties, the smaller-scale observational visits to Guatemala and Mexico. SUNY/IDG (Chief of Party Bob Balkin) operates a project in Mexico with the Mexican Congress and the University of Texas at Austin (Chief of Party Reginald Todd) operates a modernization project with the Congress of Guatemala. Both the observational trip to Guatemala and the observational trip to Mexico in support of the library modernization and digital archive will take place later on in 2000. Nicaraguan Deputies attending the conference were able to learn many details about the student-based legislative research models successfully used in other Central American republics and in developing democracies around the world.

**Goal 1 Commentary and Results for this Quarter.** The physical creation of the LIP workspace, the recruitment of university students as interns, the identification of academics to work as mentors and the increased contact with experts in legislative areas are all building the foundation of a neutral research service for the NNA. The development of an expert database marks an important change in the consultative process for legislation in Nicaragua: the utilization of local and international technical experts to address national problems. The creation of this list, however, is no more important than the willingness of legislators to consult such experts. SUNY/IDG will promote this consultative process in several dimensions (expert database, testimony at committee meetings and hearings, commentary on draft legislation). Spanish-speaking experts are being lined up to offer seminars to Deputies and staff on budget analysis and bill-drafting, and this expertise should not dissipate after the training events but rather contribute to the NNA's internal capacity; this month the Modernization Committee and SUNY/IDG are seeking the full support of the *Junta Directiva* in this regard. Efforts to create a CSO directory have begun, and the SUNY/IDG has a familiar relationship with several prominent Nicaraguan CSOs. While the New Deputy orientation plans have not yet begun, a great deal of SUNY/IDG's prior legislative project (1997-2000), as well as the new ISCP Program, can be included in Deputy orientation. Such orientation will come at a time when a variety of old and new legislative services will be up and running (new ones include the MIS, LIP, CRU, modernized library, archive and training center). The visit to the Library of Congress and the international conference in Virginia are important in that key members of the Modernization Committee were reminded of the imperative to improve the quality of legislation, enhance the legislative process through a consultative process, develop neutral services for research and constituent relations, and both allow and practice oversight of public institutions. The overall result is that the Assembly is even more conscious of its need to improve the quality of legislation and services and to consult civil society to a greater degree. SUNY/IDG has taken initial steps to establish mechanisms to achieve these goals, although challenges remain: getting full and visible institutional support for the initiatives; establishing stronger links with CSOs and their strengthening activities; working out the details for important and contentious activities such as public hearings and *cabildos abiertos*; and getting the support and enthusiasm of a wider group of Deputies and NNA staff for ISCP goals.

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

Activities:

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



## 2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training

**2.1 Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings.** The SUNY/IDG Chief of Party and home office assistant met with Mr. Valdrak Jaentshke and Ms. Patricia Gomez of NDC in early March to discuss the supply side and demand side strategies to improve public participation in the Assembly on several fronts. There is a unique opportunity for SUNY/IDG (with its working relationship in the Assembly) to work with NDC in its administration of diverse strengthening efforts among NGOs and CSOs to improve the latter's impact in national legislation and debate. Both parties agreed to explore the degree in which the ISCP Program run by SUNY/IDG and the civil society strengthening program run by NDC can collaborate. For example, public hearings hosted by specific commissions may be attended by representatives of key civil society groups, public hearings held by groups of Deputies in an electoral district may listen to citizen input, both sides can encourage civility and tolerance in the holding of a public hearing, etc. SUNY/IDG anticipates the collaboration of its Chief of Party (Guillermo García), CRU Coordinator (Federico Rostrán), the NNA official contact (Ernesto Rodríguez), and staff of caseworkers and interns, together with a range of CSOs, to promote, hold, manage and record public meetings under this activity. A key challenge being addressed at present is that of defining a mutually acceptable method for NNA committees and CSOs to work together on such meetings. One prominent CSO with which SUNY/IDG has a standing relationship, *Hagamos Democracia* (Ms. Gabriela Serrano) has developed plans for holding less politically controversial town meetings on issues such as the environment. SUNY/IDG is planning to meet with all NGOs and/or CSOs working in this area to ensure coordination of efforts. However, on the supply side, specific committees have not yet been identified for the purposes of developing a series of issue-focused, public meetings.

**2.2 Constituent Relations Unit (CRU).** *Location and set-up.* Thus far, this unit has taken the name *Oficina de Participación Pública (OPP)*.<sup>2</sup> Due to a lack of space within the Assembly, this second key component of the ISCP Program is also being housed at the SUNY/IDG project office. Expanded work space has been provided by the property owner to accommodate the approximately seven staff needed for the CRU. The SUNY/IDG project office has equipped this space with furniture and is in the process of procuring computers and telephone lines to serve this unit. As with the LIP initiative, the CRU should have an “inauguration” to ensure official NNA support for this unit and to inform the legislative and civil society community of its role. The roles of the LIP and CRU imply that they are, in effect, extensions of the NNA and the latter should lend its credibility to them as well as official symbols.

*CRU Coordinator and staff.* This unit's coordinator, Mr. Federico Rostrán, began work on May 15 and has had numerous orientation meetings with the Chief

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<sup>2</sup> The activities undertaken by the CRU (or *OPP*) are expected to include several of the other activities under *Goal 2. Greater Opportunities for Public Participation in the Legislative Process*, such as those described in activities 2.1, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5, and will involve close collaboration with Nicaraguan CSOs.

of Party as well as with diverse NNA departments. He was selected after an evaluation process involving numerous applicants and a ranking of candidates. Formal NNA approval of this hire was given in writing by Dr. Leopoldo Navarro, Secretary of the Modernization Committee. Mr Rostrán was a legislative assistant in press matters to U.S. Representative Bernard Sanders (Independent-VT). When the Chief of Party and Modernization Committee present the Spanish version of the ISCP Program's Year 1 Work Plan to the *Junta Directiva* in late June or early July, the NNA will be in a position to transfer at least three existing staff to the CRU caseworker positions, and the Chief of Party has formally requested that the NNA name such individuals. Interns to work in this area are being slotted from among the recommended students from area universities discussed in Activity 1.1 (LIP) above. Additionally, the Chief of Party participated in several fora held in Managua to evaluate and debate legislation governing citizen participation and non-profit CSOs.

**2.3 NNA Outreach Activities.** SUNY/IDG has met with representatives from NDC, *Hagamos Democracia*, *Fundemos* and CDH. These activities are slated to be in full swing in the second half of Year 1, after the consolidation of the CRU.

**2.4 Development and Dissemination of Informational Materials about the NNA and its Functions.** As stated above, SUNY/IDG has met with CSOs with an excellent track record in this area, and will encourage NNA participation in this process as this work begins in the second half of Year 1.

**2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training.** As stated above, the Chief of Party and home office assistant met with Mr. Frank Cesar and Ms. Cristiana Chamorro of the *Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro* in order to explore issues of NNA/press relations. It was concluded that this area is particularly problematical in Nicaragua, and that both sides (media and legislators) needed to learn more about each other's work in order to improve communication. SUNY/IDG has contacted several consultants in this field, such as Mr. Robert Balkin (SUNY/Mexico), a veteran media analyst in Latin America, as well as Mr. Alfonso Ferrufino, a former legislator who heads a CSO in Bolivia. Both Spanish-speaking experts may be able to come to Managua and give 2 day seminars for legislators, journalists and NNA press staff as early as July or August. It should be noted that the three NNA deputies who attended the international conference in Virginia (Activity 1.6 above) were exposed to sustained debates on press issues and public oversight issues.

**Goal 2 Commentary and Results for this Quarter.** The main advances in this area have been the creation of the CRU work space and the recruitment of the CRU Coordinator, since many of the activities under this goal flow from the CRU. A local CSO has made a formal agreement with several NNA committees to hold public meetings to explore national issues and receive public input. SUNY/IDG aims to support similar activities in both the

technical execution as well as the NNA's ability to come forth with a articulated strategy to offer this mechanism to all committees, along with procedures and rules to better manage such public meetings. The CRU Coordinator has been meeting with CSOs and NNA departments to evaluate the current state of affairs and develop a strategy to address the need for public participation and input in the legislative process, as well as for improved press relations. Both the outreach activities and informational materials components are on hold until the CRU is fully staffed. SUNY/IDG is planning to offer NNA Deputies and staff several seminars with international consultants in the area of press relations. No background breakfasts, informal meetings or training workshops have yet been held, although they are planned for the coming quarters. Remaining challenges with respect to Goal 2 are diverse: establishing a functional and institutionally supported CRU; obtaining existing NNA staff and approval from the *Junta Directiva* to be a part of the Assembly structure; designing activities to combine CSO resources with modernization goals of the NNA without major political friction; overseeing the consultative process so that public meetings do not disintegrate into heated conflict; taking big steps ahead in the media/Assembly relationship through improving legislators' behavior and media coverage; and motivating Deputies to participate in outreach and civic education among their constituents.

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

#### Activities:

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

**3.1 Power Plants, Network Extensions and Public Access Workstations: Follow-on Components to the New Information System.** As part of the contingency plan developed at the outset of this project, the power plant work and its expense were moved to Year 2. As noted in the IT consultant's report, SUNY/IDG recently held a competition among local vendors to perform the work of installing 19 additional network points to accommodate the NNA library, political party offices (*Bancadas*), the new training center, and NNA press office. The competition also involved the procurement of computer equipment to the SUNY/IDG project office (LIP and CRU), and this work was tentatively awarded to the firm Merinco, S.A. Both the network extensions and the computer equipment are needed to accommodate Deputy access and to support research and public participation functions in the LIP and CRU, respectively. Public access workstations oriented toward the legislative process were proposed in meetings with area universities, although it may be possible for universities to contribute space and equipment for their creation.

**3.2 NNA Deputies' Virtual (Laptop Computer) Office.** A draft letter requesting an equipment donation has been prepared for transmission to firms and foundations (Gates Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, IBM, Toshiba, Sony, Compaq, Dell, Gateway) likely to show interest in this high-profile donation. However, a Spanish version of same will be generated soon and this donation need and both versions will be transmitted to the international donor community in Nicaragua. A donor already in Nicaragua may wish to cooperate in this fashion. The requested donation involves laptop computers, future upgrades, software and licenses, a fund for training, a number of laser printers, and additional items.

**3.3 Design and Implementation of a NNA Training Center.** In March, members of the Modernization Committee considered space for the training center in the open space in the main lobby (basement level) of the NNA's *Banco de America* building. However, since that time another appropriate space has been offered for this purpose, also on the basement level of the same building. In a recent letter, the president of the NNA officially designated this space for the training center, and the Chief of Party is preparing a list of physical improvement requirements (painting, floor cleaning, air conditioning, etc.) in order for SUNY/IDG to equip the space and bring it into operation. SUNY/IDG has requested that it have priority (but not exclusive) use of this center during the life of the ISCP Program due to the many meetings, staff training and seminars to be offered and the lack of alternative space. In a recent competition, SUNY/IDG entertained proposals from 11 vendors with respect to the provision of equipment for the training center (see IT consultant report). This center may take several months to refurbish (NNA responsibility) and equip (SUNY/IDG responsibility), but will constitute a needed resources in both the NNA institutional structure and the ISCP Program. An inauguration of same will ensure high visibility and familiarity among NNA Deputies, committees and staff, and promote an even-handed, multiparty use of the facility.

**3.3 Modernization of the NNA's *Javier Avilés* Legislative Library.**

*Assessment.* The SUNY/IDG project staff in Nicaragua have held several work meetings with the *Javier Avilés* Library staff in order to research the needs and current state of the library. It has been possible to meet with the person in charge of technical processing, Lic. Fanny Ocampo, but not possible to meet with the library's Director, Sr. José Luis Bendaña, who also serves as an advisor to the NNA President. A preliminary assessment of the library was performed by SUNY/IDG's IT consultant, and addressed the following areas: the library's objectives, functions, services offered, codification system, inventory, statistics of services performed in the last year, organization, computer equipment, past modernization initiatives, strengths and weaknesses, and conclusions and recommendations. This study found that this card catalogue-based library has limited resources, very little use by NNA Deputies or staff occurs, exchange agreements are not operating, the library has not had adequate support or

recognition in relation to the legislative process, library staff are aware that changes, including computerization, are needed, library services should serve its main clients (NNA Deputies, staff, advisors, experts, etc.) and the library should take on a proactive role and have a full-time director.

*Additional research.* The IT consultant contacted other major institutional libraries in Nicaragua (courts and universities) to compare the collection size, organization and software used in each. This was done to assist in the development of a strategic library modernization plan for the NNA that addresses issues of compatibility, collection development and user training.

*Modernization issues addressed in Library of Congress (LC) visit.* As mentioned in Activity 1.6 above, NNA Deputies Leopoldo Navarro, María Lourdes Bolaños and Luis Urbina, along with COP Guillermo García, CTO Michael Eddy and home office assistant Tom Van Alstyne, recently had a full day of meetings at the LC including a demonstration of THOMAS (U.S. Congressional bill-tracking system), orientation to the LC Law Library and functions, including legal abstracts and indexing, a demonstration of the Global Legal Information Network (of which the NNA may become a member soon through InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) support), exchange possibilities with the LC Hispanic Acquisition Division, and the processes and philosophy of the legislative research service provided by the Congressional research Service (CRS). It is expected that the LC/NNA microfilm exchange agreement (involving the *Gaceta Oficial*, the official publication of Nicaraguan laws) dating back to 1995 will be revived if the relevant equipment in Nicaragua can be repaired. Several Spanish-speaking professionals at the CRS who are familiar with legislative strengthening programs, such as Mr. Clay Wellborn, Ms. Nina Serafino and Mr. Bill Robinson, are potentially available to travel to Managua for 2 or 3 days to offer training and seminars in needed areas under the ISCP Program. SUNY faculty are also foreseen in this activity, and the monumental task of converting the NNA's legislative library into a research arm and reliable resource could be helped by faculty and graduate student involvement, student exchanges through campuses and additional training opportunities (these activities would not necessarily depend on ISCP Program funding).

**3.4 Digital Archive for the NNA.** SUNY/IDG conducted a survey among NNA Deputies and staff to determine which staff routinely access which type of archival material, and with what frequency. SUNY/IDG has consulted with the Archive's Director, Lic. Liesel Mora, and the person in charge of computerized records for this area, Mr. Exequiel Soto. The Assembly has at least 66,000 documents to be scanned and digitalized, and this documentation consists of statistical tables, legal entities, other types of decrees, statutes, agendas, and plenary minutes. An additional 750,000 pages of documents are housed there, but are not classified. The IT consultant held several meetings with equipment and software providers to address this activity, such as SED from Costa Rica and GBM from Nicaragua.

**Goal 3 Commentary and Results in this Quarter.** In spite of minor down-scaling of work in this area due to potential budget shortages in Year 2, much has been done this quarter. In fact, SUNY/IDG appears to have consistent success in implementing badly needed technological and infrastructural improvements for the Assembly. The power plant work has been moved ahead to Year 2 for cost reasons. As the new MIS system still has access problems (from the point of view of individual Deputies), SUNY/IDG has proceeded to line up a contractor to complete the needed network extensions and public workstations. This access will better satisfy the Deputies' demand for access to the new MIS features. Greater access to the system for both the Assembly and the public will enhance the legislative process because the parties will be more informed and take more interest in updated information. SUNY/IDG has developed a draft letter to request donor support of the Virtual Office initiative (laptop computers for NNA Deputies), and is contacting multiple foundations and donors. The laptops bring increased efficiency and accessibility to many routine dimensions of legislative work. While the technology itself will not transform the problems present in the legislative process, it certainly will help those Deputies who want more information both from the Assembly and from their constituents, CSOs and other institutions. The NNA Training Center is a highly useful resource in the long and short terms, and it provides a space for training to a broad spectrum of NNA departments and areas. SUNY/IDG expects the completion of the center in the coming quarters to enhance the performance of the ISCP activities which include numerous seminars and workshops in various areas. A great deal of attention has been given recently to the NNA library, and both opportunities and obstacles abound. SUNY/IDG has evaluated the situation and planned to vastly improve its functions in collaboration with existing staff. The visit to the U.S. Library of Congress (LC) reinforced the interest in improving the library and creating a non-partisan research service. However, the NNA has outstanding agreements with the LC that are inactive (i.e., microfilm exchange) and there is doubt that the existing NNA library director can or will implement any major changes to the status quo. SUNY/IDG stands ready to design and implement a technological upgrade and to provide training and a study tour to Mexico in this regard, but will need considerable action on the part of the *Junta Directiva* to truly transform the library to a dynamic, growing and self-projecting operation. Finally, the plans for the digital archive have involved a survey of NNA staff to learn more about usage, along with research and meetings to determine appropriate software. Overall, the implementation of the technological aspects of modernization are proceeding as planned, and most components will support a more informed legislative body, allow greater public access to information and help the NNA staff manage information more efficiently.

## **Conclusions**

The ISCP Program is a follow-on program to the previous legislative strengthening assistance efforts provided by USAID in the mid and late 1990s.

Earlier efforts were able to implement a significant change in technology that supports the legislative process, along with training, study tours and strategic planning. The present program both continues the technological improvements but also addresses persistent weak points in the creation of legislation: bill-drafting skills and background studies; incorporation of CSOs and other expert input in committee deliberations; improving the relationship with the media; promoting non-partisan, professional legislative functions such as legislative studies, budget analysis, library resources, constituent relations, outreach and making more NNA information available and useful to the public.

The relationship with the NNA Modernization Committee continues to be positive, and four work meetings were held during the present quarter. The MC has several new members and the existing members are enthusiastic and committed to the modernization concept. The MC continues to be multi-party, and SUNY/IDG is conscious of the need to have a broad spectrum of political “buy-in” to the ISCP Program. The 2001 national elections are far away enough so as to lend stability to the ISCP Program. The NNA President (also the nominal MC President) has delegated considerable authority to the MC Secretary to handle these affairs, and has also named an official NNA counterpart to smoothen administrative changes brought on by the ISCP Program. SUNY/IDG will encourage the Deputies who attended the international conference in June to present their findings to a wide audience (NNA Deputies and staff) if possible.

Delays due to contractual fine-tuning and administrative matters were minor, and the hiring of additional staff is enabling two key components (legislative research services and constituent services) to be incubated within the SUNY/IDG project office in Managua. The NNA will soon need to provide some voluntarily “re-tasked” staff to serve as CRU caseworkers and to lend official support of both units.

Collaboration with CSOs and NGOs on the various activity areas has occurred, but is expected to be ever-increasing given the goals set out in the ISCP Program. Meetings were held with representatives from NDC, but no formal agreement as to specific cooperation has been produced.

The main challenges remaining for this program are: implementing two new units (LIP and CRU) in a meaningful and professional way that enjoys full NNA support; improving public participation in the legislative process in meaningful (not merely cosmetic) ways; supporting the creation of well-researched, quality legislation and showing tangible results; making headway in the productive incorporation of CSO input in the legislative process; orchestrating events for the NNA and media that suggest “better interactions;” building appropriate internal NNA support for new services (library resources, training center, archive, database, directory, LIP research service, CRU service) in such a way as to implement, not stifle, these initiatives.

**Appendix 1: SUNY/IDG Work Statement from Contract  
524-C-00-00-00032-00**



## SECTION C - DESCRIPTION/SPECIFICATIONS/WORK STATEMENT

### Introduction and Overview

The International Development Group of the State University of New York (SUNY/IDG) proposes a three-year Institutional Strengthening and Citizen Participation (ISCP) Program for continued legislative technical assistance to the Nicaraguan National Assembly (NNA) in reinforcing legislators' capability to enact legislation and to build mutually accepted channels for citizen input in national legislation and debate.

Specifically, the Program includes the following integrated results areas:

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

This initiative supports the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission's overall Strategic Objective (SO) of *More political participation, transparency and compromise* and specifically Result 1.4 *More accountable and responsive government*.

**The ISCP Program also supports the 1998 Grant Agreement-- signed between the governments of the United States and Nicaragua—for NNA capacity building. Key objectives in the areas of governance cited from that agreement include:**

- **Legislative Staff Training** - Continued training and technical assistance to staff of the Legislative Commissions;
- **Constituent Relations** - Assistance for establishing constituent relations to increase government responsiveness to citizen needs;
- **Management Information System (MIS) reinstallation**<sup>3</sup> - Assistance in transferring the existing MIS equipment to a new building once constructed; and
- **New Deputies** -Training for new deputies to familiarize them with the legislative tools installed through earlier projects.

The ISCP Program builds on lessons learned from the current, 27-month Nicaraguan Legislative Strengthening Project as well as SUNY/IDG's recognized expertise in the area of legislative strengthening worldwide. The design of this Program also reflects input from leading deputies, particularly in terms of their expressed interest in the areas of using information technology and improved resources to enhance their work. SUNY/IDG's ongoing work with the NNA provides a unique perspective in terms of analyzing feasibility, Deputy interest, and the potential for high impact. Our team has worked closely with a broad spectrum of Nicaraguan legislators and listened to their needs. With the October, 1999 inauguration of the institution's data network, the President of the NNA, Dr. Iván Escobar Fornos, specifically requested that SUNY/IDG continue its technical assistance (see Annex A). Benefiting from recent meetings with the Modernization Commission, this proposal reflects specific areas that a broad spectrum of NNA leaders are interested in and ready to support.

Sustainability is also an important consideration of this Program. While the NNA needs tools and training to address Nicaragua's problems through effective representation, lawmaking and oversight, the institution also needs to ensure that positive changes are consolidated in the long run. Our activities challenge Deputies to be actively engaged in the modernization process and in

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<sup>3</sup> The new building to house NNA offices has not been built to date. However, during 1998 and 1999 the backbone for a comprehensive network of computers was designed and installed in the existing *Palacio Legislativo* and *Banco de America* buildings used by the NNA. SUNY/IDG proposes specific follow-on work in the technology area in power plants to stabilize existing power outages, network extension, *cabinas públicas*, a notebook computer donation plan for NNA deputies, digital archives and modernization of the library system.

the opening of the NNA to citizens' concerns. Fostering motivation and political will is a challenging qualitative task that SUNY/IDG looks forward to undertaking. Along similar lines, the ISCP Program recognizes Nicaraguans' ability to solve their own problems, and proposes only a modest addition of personnel within the NNA so that future continuation is financially possible. SUNY/IDG is confident that the proposed activities, services and benefits can be fine-tuned to meet existing needs, and that the NNA will contribute its existing human resources. Although considerable political will is required to launch this Program, we expect its components will be sustained because the NNA and civil society will benefit from and come to rely on them. In sum, this proposal stands to bring technical assistance to the NNA in the form of feasible activities that can be institutionalized during the life of the Program.

The ISCP Program proposal includes five sections with Section I focusing on the context and lessons learned during the current Nicaraguan Legislative Strengthening Project (NLSP). Section II includes the technical proposal detailing results, activities and benchmarks for meeting new challenges. Section III presents the proposed personnel and management plan, including the staffing pattern over a 33-month period (2/1/00 - 11/1/03). Section IV outlines SUNY/IDG's institutional capabilities and experience in legislative development activities around the world. The cost proposal comprises Section V, followed by annexed materials including CVs of personnel, letters of commitment, a first year work plan and supplementary material.

## **I. THE CONTEXT OF LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 1997-2000 NICARAGUAN LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING PROJECT**

### **A. The Current Context.**

Overcoming decades of open conflict and political polarization, Nicaragua's highest lawmaking body is transitioning toward a more modern and effective institution. The advent of peace in the early 1990s and the influx of international assistance have contributed to a stabilization of the political climate, although sharp divides exist. In recent years the NNA has experienced difficulty in securing important legislation, and roadblocks reemerged in early 1999. Important deadlocked issues include land reform, constitutional revisions, reintegration of the Contras and prosecution of human rights violations - and these constitute deep cleavages in Nicaraguan society. Social unrest caused the NNA to shut down for weeks in March and April, 1999, and its public image has suffered. Repeatedly, limited resources and intense partisan polarization constrains the NNA's ability to develop effective and needed legislation with input from the public.

USAID and its contractors have played a strongly constructive role in Nicaragua's development in recent years by focusing on good governance, conflict resolution, financial restructuring, environmental conservation, health and education, management of foreign debt, and disaster relief. Continued USAID support for democratization is needed for increased capacity in government accountability, transparency, efficiency, participation and decentralization. As a key link between citizens and their government, legislative strengthening continues to be a major focus of the USAID Mission. Around the world, SUNY/IDG has consistently found that an effective and responsive legislature is crucial to democracy.

As the decade comes to a close, important challenges remain, particularly as national attention to democratic progress has been partially diverted by the massive social and economic damage of Hurricane Mitch. This diversion is ironic given that it is precisely in the aftermath of Mitch that capable democratic institutions are needed more than ever. For example, large-scale reconstruction will represent a difficult test of national and local government performance. It is crucial to the public trust that government is perceived to be playing a

constructive and transparent role in the Mitch recovery efforts. SUNY/IDG views the post-Mitch national reconstruction effort as a key opportunity to support good government and accountability. Through a combination of technical assistance, training, exchange, and basic infrastructure improvement, SUNY/IDG will further strengthen the capacity of the NNA and focus on areas for improvement. The overall goal is to help the NNA become a more effective institution, and one more responsive to the needs of Nicaraguans.

Two themes complement the ISCP strategy. The first is that the partisan polarization characteristic of the NNA needs to be mitigated by a capacity for compromise and negotiation. As Deputies rise to the challenge of improving their capacities to work and exploring more ways to know their constituents, they should find themselves more capable of compromise and "moving beyond" deadlocked issues. To this end, the SUNY/IDG team will design and support mechanisms for Deputies to engage in effective and open exchange between themselves and with civil society actors, including the press, NGOs, and private citizens. The Program also requires that the NNA be to some degree united in order to effectively use new resources. To achieve this utilization, all activities will be balanced across political parties.

The second strategic theme is building on the notion of legislators as active, "winning" leaders in the modernization process. SUNY/IDG intends that Nicaraguan Deputies and civil society actors will themselves be the protagonists of change. To this end, SUNY/IDG has designed activities that invite Deputies and professional staff to be planners and participants in a dynamic movement toward more efficient legislative work and open doors to the citizenry. In this sense, ideally the SUNY/IDG project staff are low-key, technical facilitators who have brought sufficient knowledge, techniques and experience to the NNA at the right time and in the right way. Our activities offer useful incentives to Nicaragua's elected leaders: better tools for creating legislation, orderly mechanisms for incorporating citizens' views and improved legitimacy in both subjective and objective senses. The degree of political "buy-in" is both a condition of and means to measure the ISCP Program, and concerted effort on the part of the NNA is required.

#### **A. SUNY/IDG'S Results, 1997-2000**

Since October of 1997, SUNY/IDG has provided technical assistance to the NNA through the current USAID-funded<sup>4</sup> NLSP. The NLSP's successes in building support for modernization, implementing a Strategic Plan for Information Technology, training Deputies and staff in technical aspects of legislative work and laying the path for public participation have been widely recognized within the NNA and the USAID Mission. The ISCP Program proposed here will build on these successes as well as on the strong relationships between the SUNY/IDG team and the NNA members. At the same time, the new Program will tackle a number of persistent legislative modernization challenges. The following represents a run down of the results and lessons learned since October, 1997, organized around the objectives that guided this earlier work. SUNY/IDG's current initiatives and achievements are summarized with a statement of how they relate to the components comprising our proposed follow-on work.

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<sup>4</sup> In a project lasting 27 months and spanning October, 1997 to January, 2000, USAID awarded the Research Foundation of State University of New York, on behalf of the SUNY/International Development Group, a Fixed-Price Deliverables Contract totaling roughly \$1.1 million to carry out legislative strengthening activities. Activities to date include study tours, technical assistance to the NNA Modernization Committee, strengthening activities with the Office of Budget Analysis and Oversight, strengthening activities with the Local Government Affairs Committee with training and expert seminars, implementation of an Information Technology Plan including training for NNA staff and deputies, development of legislative information systems for bill-tracking, legislative motions, agenda and enacted law, installation of a data network and fiber optic cabling to connect NNA offices, staff and committees, electrical cabling to support new computer network and databases, major upgrading of NNA web site, and interconnection via network to other Government of Nicaragua (GON) institutions. Thus, the current project has focused on committee strengthening, technological infrastructure and corresponding legislative staff training.

*Objective 1: Assure effective coordination among legislators in support of efforts to modernize the NNA.*

**Results to date:** SUNY/IDG's team has worked closely with the NNA's Modernization Committee and USAID, holding regular meetings, planning the implementation of activities, and organizing study tours to Guatemala, Costa Rica and Peru to see legislative modernization work first-hand. Support and motivation among Modernization Committee members has been exceptionally strong, committee input and involvement in the technical assistance has enhanced the level of political buy-in in the NNA, and significant non-partisan achievements in training and information systems were made. Whereas opposing parties were active combatants a few years ago, they now regularly meet in each others' homes and have a more productive relationship. Deputies belonging to the Modernization Committee have literally made hundreds of decisions on specific modernization activities in the last two years.

**Ongoing needs:** A wider group of NNA leaders and senior staffers would benefit from direct exposure to efficient legislative services both in and outside the Central American region. Unless modernization initiatives and collaboration with the Modernization Committee are kept steady, advances in the NNA's tool kit for effective lawmaking could be stalled and wither. The time is right to involve a greater number of Deputies in modernization work and encourage multi-party agendas.

*Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of the NNA to analyze, modify, and monitor the execution of the national budget, and to analyze, develop and assess the fiscal implications of legislation and international financial obligations.*

**Results to date:** As a priority concern, SUNY/IDG undertook the task of providing technical assistance to areas of the NNA oriented toward the national budget, such as strengthening activities for the Office for Budget Analysis and Oversight (BAO) and the Economic, Finance and Budget Committee (EFBC). Activities included providing equipment, software and training to improve the NNA's ability to analyze budget information. SUNY/IDG was able to implement a strengthening plan for the BAO which included the installation of a cutting-edge computer system and software, seminar training for staff in software applications and budget oversight techniques. Here, a modest but significant step forward was made in strengthening budget and oversight capabilities. However, roadblocks prevented the project from providing any technical assistance to the EFBC, and that initiative was ultimately replaced with others.

**Ongoing needs:** Overall, budget analysis continues to be a weakness of the NNA vis-à-vis the executive branch. Budget analysis should be an accessible service to all committees, especially given the pattern of post-Mitch reconstruction funding and public demands for accountability. The NNA will unquestionably be stronger as a national institution if it takes advantage of the new information system and promotes expertise in budget analysis to study the fiscal implications of legislative bills.

*Objective 3: Facilitate access for legislators and staff to information that is critical to their work, such as the status of pending legislation, and improve the productivity and performance of legislators and staff by providing them with access to information technology.*

**Results to Date:** Headed by a Chief of Party (COP) experienced in legislative information systems and in fostering consensus among legislators, SUNY/IDG implemented a Strategic Plan for Information Technology in the NNA entailing needs assessments, computer equipment, software development and user training. Given the scope of change involved, the importance of this achievement is indeed historical. The NNA will now utilize a carefully constructed data network system installed throughout the *Palacio Legislativo* and *Banco de*

America buildings. Data-structured cabling and fiber optic cabling, 265 network access points, 44 computers for committees and legislative areas, connections to existing features such as the voting system and new electrical cabling to support the computer network all lay the groundwork for unprecedented and dependable access to legislative information throughout Nicaragua. Just completed, the system offers a far greater degree of information sharing between Deputies and committees. SUNY/IDG recognizes, however, that more important than the technological infrastructure itself is every Deputy's knowledge base and his or her available tools for analyzing and promoting legislation. Legislators will soon have access to many types of databases, legal reference materials and other GON branches.

**Ongoing needs:** NNA deputies and staff will need additional training in how to use these tools, and expanding the network to include all committees and support offices should be included. Further infrastructure enhancements are needed such as electrical power plants in the legislative buildings, due to frequent and disruptive power losses. The information system is new, legislators will benefit from bill-drafting experience on it, and SUNY/IDG can ensure that the new tools are used and understood. Moreover, as in other countries such as Peru, the means to allow public access to legislative information is worth supporting.

*Objective 4: Improve the capacity of legislators to objectively examine legislative proposals by providing them with succinct, timely analyses of pending legislation.*

**Results to date:** SUNY/IDG has designed and implemented features of the new information system that include subsystems in the area of existing law and basic data on the NNA, as well as interconnection with other GON and regional institutions. These subsystems combine existing law with laws that will be enacted through the new legislative systems, facilitating searches by law or bill number, and also gives immediate access to basic, updated information on committees, political parties, Deputies and NNA legislative offices. System users also have access to different institutions to support decision-making, and access to government agency information and external databases such as libraries. These technical improvements significantly widen the accessible knowledge base of NNA Deputies and staff to be used for formulating legislation. One important link is with the Central American Legislative Information Network (RILCA), a multi-donor project that has enjoyed support from the SUNY/IDG team.

The project also designed strengthening activities for the NNA's Local Government Affairs Committee (LGAC), including a needs assessment and subsequent seminars with area experts to lead toward modernization actions. Thanks to intense interest in the Nicaraguan legislative community, the LGAC is currently focusing on key issues through a series of committee meetings, seminars and public talks oriented toward municipal affairs. Local government issues intersect squarely with national ones such as post-Mitch reconstruction efforts, decentralization and local government finances. Another area that USAID is supporting through diverse channels is local government reform.

As a channel for public access to information about the NNA, its functions, legislative news, and profiles of Deputies, the NNA's web site was upgraded by SUNY/IDG's ambitious technical team. The site is designed to integrate the new legislative information systems, existing data bases, E-mail accounts to contact Deputies, and current information about the NNA--all crafted in a professional, visitor-friendly manner. Operational in September 1999, the new NNA web site is a different creature altogether. The new web site enables the public to view updated information on legislative work flows, research capabilities from remote places, and the people of Nicaragua and the world are invited to comment. Visitors can explore the information, just as legislators can show their profiles and correspond. Whereas only about 600 people visited the old NNA web site in the previous two years, more than such 3,000 visits to the new web site have been logged in the last two months.

**Ongoing needs:** Not all NNA deputies and staff have a strong command of legislative information and research tools available through the new computer network--training to suit their needs must be provided. As the NNA data network and Internet represent new media in which constantly upgraded databases are instantly accessible, helpful navigation through this imposing sea of information should be provided through training seminars that will become a typical feature of the NNA over the long term.

Like the NNA's other 17 committees, technical support of legislative bill drafting in the LGAC would be helpful. Utilization of outside experts and consulting with local governments will help a healthy range of perspectives to be brought to the table. Although USAID and many NGOs are active in municipal development, the NNA is the locus of key decisions about national, departmental and local relationships. Decentralization legislation is one example.

Finally, this lawmaking institution will need to implement policies on updating the web site and staffing the NNA's new computer network and file server. If this area is not developed neutrally and professionally, its legitimacy and value to many may wane. Online information about activities proposed below, such as public hearings and modernizing the legislative library, would keep political interest high. Nicaragua also has the possibility of sharing its advances with other countries, through democracy conferences and study tours.

Overall, the core components of SUNY/IDG's current work have provided internal capacity-building and strengthening to the NNA. Significantly, the focus of the technical assistance during this second stage is twofold: to continue to build up capabilities within the institution, and to suggest non-partisan mechanisms to reach out and increase contact between legislators and constituents and civil society groups. SUNY/IDG proposes implementation of the following activities, presented here with expected results. Some of these components are interrelated, much as our earlier work has been, and overlaps of participants are considered positive.

## **II. TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION**

The USAID Mission's Strategic Objective stresses support for *More political participation, transparency, and compromise*. In order to achieve this, the Mission has emphasized overall results including *More accountable and responsive government*. Intermediate results have also been desired in the areas of *Legislature addresses key national issues* and *Government decision-making based on greater citizen participation*.

The ISCP Program will achieve these results through integrated implementation of legislative technical assistance framed around three goals:

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

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

This goal will be supported by the six activity areas detailed below.

**Activity 1.1: Legislative Internship Program (LIP).** Aside from responding to requests for needed legislative studies in particular policy areas, internships are a crucial investment in Nicaragua's future leaders. SUNY/IDG has established successful legislative internship programs in Chile, Guatemala, and the US, and is currently implementing an internship program in neighboring El Salvador. Focusing on legislative studies and moving on to bill drafting, the ISCP Program will work with NNA leaders and university counterparts to begin an internship program during the first six months of the

project. The program will be developed in collaboration with NNA leaders, research staff, international and local consultants and Nicaraguan universities, and will ideally be housed within the Assembly. Given the political sensitivity and complex environment in the NNA and also the vital need to professionalize legislative research and bill-drafting capabilities, specific plans that involve and respect existing staff are needed.

- *Planning stage.* A four month assessment period will be necessary to study feasible methods to implement this activity, reach a consensus among parties as to "when, where, how, who and what," and determine an appropriate space for the LIP office. A crucial ingredient here will be a group of motivated, compromise-oriented NNA Deputies committed to promoting objective and party-neutral research functions within the NNA. From the onset, SUNY/IDG's COP will seek to meet with the NNA's *Junta Directiva* (the institution's highest authority) and USAID officials to negotiate a consensus to implement this activity, "sell" the program on its merits and develop a strategy to implement same with basic agreements as to scope, time-frame, key personnel and staffing, specific LIP work processes and office location. Because the obstacles to successful implementation of the LIP are considerable, the assessment/planning phase is a means to launch a sustainable activity that is understood by diverse actors in the NNA. However, SUNY/IDG knows that internships, as well as other steps to improve the research and analytical capacities of a legislature, can be very successful, as in nearby Guatemala and Costa Rica. SUNY/IDG believes that there is sufficient multi-party support for a mechanism to produce *estudios de antecedentes*<sup>5</sup>—basic background studies of specific legislative topics.
- *Establishing links with local universities.* Over the last year, SUNY/IDG's COP has met with a series of officials, department heads and academics from a range of Nicaraguan universities and public policy institutes with the objective of creating long-term contacts to benefit this type of activity. Since there is a recognized need to strengthen the links between the academic community and the NNA, SUNY/IDG staff will again conduct meetings with university counterparts to fully announce this program activity, generate interest among potential interns and take advantage of feedback from university professors. A workshop or short talk for university groups or institutes can be held by SUNY/IDG's COP and perhaps members of the Modernization Committee, explaining the purpose, structure and needs of the program. In this type of outreach, a mutually beneficial relationship is sought: the Assembly can provide a unique experience for talented students who have demonstrated abilities in writing, analysis and presentation, while the universities will contribute junior professionals in the form of interns, as well as academic and policy-oriented expertise in the form of LIP mentors and consultants. Since universities also tend to embody varying ideological currents, efforts will be made to attract participants from different political parties who will commit to working toward meeting the technical needs of the NNA rather than using the internships as a partisan opportunity.
- *Structure of the LIP initiative.* SUNY/IDG and the NNA Modernization Committee will bring together a politically balanced and supportive LIP Technical Council consisting of three Deputies and two *ad honorem* legislative professionals to advise the LIP initiative. This LIP Technical Council will have an advisory role to the design and functioning of the LIP and to its relationship to existing staff, but will not directly supervise particular legislative studies. SUNY/IDG proposes that the LIP Technical Council be chosen by the Modernization Committee and approved by the *Junta Directiva*. Hired by SUNY/IDG, the LIP Coordinator will be responsible for overall progress of the interns, managing requests for studies and presentations of results, and ensuring a technically competent and politically neutral performance of the program's tasks. At any given time, five to ten promising interns approved by the NNA Modernization Committee,

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<sup>5</sup> A frequent term in Central and South America, *estudios de antecedentes* are preliminary legal studies on a given topic which present and explain existing law.

ideally in their last year of university study or law school, will perform research on a part-time basis (with small stipends to cover meals and travel). Requests for such research will be made by NNA committees or individual Deputies, and the results of the studies will be first released to the requesting party and later released to the general public. The student interns will receive technical guidance from mentors -legislative professionals who contribute their time *ad honorem* to the program on a part-time basis. The mentors will exemplify academic/theoretical strengths as well as practical experience in public policy, and should not promote party affiliations. The chain of authority to govern this program will run from the *Junta Directiva* to the Modernization Committee, SUNY/IDG COP, LIP Coordinator, LIP mentors and interns. The LIP Technical Council will have the advisory role outlined above and answer to the Modernization Committee.

- *Relationship to existing staff.* The LIP initiative is intended as an activity that complements, and not replaces, the NNA's existing legislative research capacity. While it is certain that one of the big challenges is to prevent the internships from becoming partisan commodities, SUNY/IDG holds that the work products of the LIP -objective background studies on issues of national importance- represent an innovative and needed contribution. SUNY/IDG expects that Deputies will rely on both the existing staff and the LIP for legislative research support, and that the LIP will be turned over to the NNA's *Dirección General de Asesoría Legislativa* (Legislative Advisory Office) at or before the conclusion of the program. In fact, as in El Salvador, the *Junta Directiva* may request that existing NNA advisory staff be re-tasked to work as support staff within the LIP. The latter action can bring significant cost savings, utilization of existing human resources, and help to make the activity sustainable. SUNY/IDG holds that the most productive way to define the relationship between the existing advisory staff and the LIP is to stress that, overall, both groups are participating in strengthening activities that encourage neutrality, competence and recognition of diverse viewpoints in civil society.
- *Physical location of LIP Office.* In spite of the space limitations of the NNA's two main buildings, the ideal location to house this activity is in or near the Assembly's offices. For purposes of sustainability, a long-term presence (at least 3 years) inside the Assembly will allow the best conditions for the benefits of the program to be fully experienced and accepted. Thus, the first preference is indeed to house this activity within the Assembly. However, because physical space in the NNA is very limited and availability is subject to negotiation, office space for the LIP may not be readily available, and may cause the program to be incubated in a location nearby. SUNY/IDG will request that the NNA give its full moral support to an external LIP office if this is the case, and identify itself closely with this program activity.
- *Training for first round of interns.* Orientation for the work to be performed under the LIP will include information on research tools and sources, procedures on how to proceed with carrying out a study, rules regarding confidentiality during the research process, LIP mentors' roles and responsibilities, format for the actual write-up and making presentations to the requesting party, efforts to produce research studies that are politically neutral or that reflect diverse points of view, and all the specific policies that will be adopted under the LIP. Consultants from the database will be used for training interns in this area, bringing expertise on research techniques, bill-drafting and economic implications of legislation. Since the "client" of the LIP is the NNA, its committees and Deputies, the *Junta Directiva* and/or Modernization Committee may choose to hold a brief ceremony to induct the interns and explain what is expected of them.

In sum, the processes and products of the LIP will strengthen the NNA's lawmaking functions in several areas. The NNA will have detailed information on bills and Government white papers while interns -future professionals- become more knowledgeable and engaged in the NNA's processes and legislative matters.



NNA Deputies will come to rely on such legislative studies by the end of Year 1.

Intermediate results:

1. Interns are trained in legislative research techniques and Deputies' access to concise information on a topic will be enhanced.
2. Positive structural improvements result from the LIP initiative, such as a closer relationship between the NNA and Nicaraguan universities and a more profound utilization of local talent in the public policy fields.
3. The LIP's thorough and objective research style enhances the NNA's ability to analyze and generate effective legislation.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of *estudios de antecedentes* (legislative studies) requested by the NNA and prepared by ISCP interns
- Number of university counterparts consulted and local experts utilized in ISCP legislative studies
- Number of ISCP legislative studies referenced by NNA committees and Deputies in debating and proposing legislation

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 4: Start-up phase of the LIP, including negotiations with the *Junta Directiva*, selection of LIP Coordinator, naming of the LIP Technical Council, links established with Nicaraguan universities and institutes
- Months 5 - 8: LIP mentors are identified, LIP interns are recruited and approved, office space is located and equipped, consultants are hired and training for interns begins
- Months 9 - 12: NNA committees and Deputies request legislative studies, interns prepare basic legislative studies, LIP continues to recruit new interns from university setting, legislative studies are presented to requesting parties, and later publicly disclosed, studies are referenced by NNA committees and Deputies
- Months 13 - 33: LIP interns prepare studies by request and present results to Technical Committee and NNA committees and Deputies

**Activity 1.2: Database of Local and International Experts to Draft Reports and Testify Before Committees.**

One of the NNA's principal obstacles to effectiveness is limited access to research staff. At the same time, Deputies are required to examine increasingly complex issues of national and international importance. The NNA Modernization Committee has requested SUNY/IDG's assistance in creating a central file on experts who can be called on to contribute to legislative work and for testimony in public hearings. SUNY/IDG has developed systems of expert databases and legislative studies for legislatures in other programs and will adapt this activity to the Nicaraguan context. SUNY/IDG's file in Mozambique, for example, included more than 200 experts, from whom the Mozambican National Assembly now routinely requests studies and uses to inform legislators. Nicaragua is rich in substantive expertise in areas for which the NNA must pass legislation, and this system will help them to tap into that expertise. SUNY/IDG and its partners in the development field also have extensive contacts from which to pull information on international experts for this purpose.

- *Method of database development.* This activity will require several types of effort by the SUNY/IDG project staff and consultants: networking at high levels to get the participation of individuals who are familiar with experts; getting existing lists of experts from diverse sources for comparison; updating and entering data on experts; outreach to diverse entities to uncover new experts especially in key areas, and so on. Two local consultants will work with SUNY/IDG, the Modernization Committee, Nicaraguan universities, think tanks and CSOs to develop a list of experts

by policy area who are willing to draft reports and testify before NNA committees. Special care will be taken to ensure that the compilation of data on experts reflects a wide political spectrum and that the information is presented to the database user in an objective manner.

- *Usefulness of work product.* Deputies can use the database to request studies and testimony before committees, and over time, may use this resource to solicit comments for drafting and debating legislative bills. This system will be an effective means for the NNA to obtain comment on Government white papers and on proposed legislation. Not only would the NNA have a centralized, updated and openly accessible location for information on consultants, but it may choose to log the participation of each consultant in hearings, reports and other consulting. SUNY/IDG believes that such a compilation should be available outside the NNA as well. NNA committees may also consult the database to request expert input or attendance at the various public hearings and similar events supported under the ISCP program.
- *Need for updating the database.* Updating should be planned in coordination with the administrative authorities of the NNA, and the *Dirección General de Asesoría Legislativa* (Legislative Advisory Office) is the logical authority to take responsibility for this repository of current information on experts in fields as diverse as legislation itself. There may be advantages to using the NNA's new data network as the preferred access point to the database, since the information on experts would be widely accessible and easily updated.

Intermediate results:

1. A database of Nicaraguan and international experts by policy area are compiled and made available to NNA committees, Deputies, legislative advisors, political parties and civil society groups.
2. Experts from the database are consulted at various points in the legislative process, such as background studies, committee hearings, reports and draft legislation.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of experts included in the expert database and frequency of updates
- Number of laws developed with the support of local and international technical experts from the database

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 2: SUNY/IDG project staff begin to design the most useful format for the expert database, using a network of contacts and utilizing existing lists of consultants. Compilation of data on experts begins by Month 2
- Months 3 - 6: A draft version of the database is published, data collection will continue and results are made available on a regular basis thereafter.
- Months 6 - 33: Expert database is updated and consulted by NNA Deputies and staff

**Activity 1.3. Intensive Training for NNA Deputies and Staff in Legislative Bill-Drafting and Budget Analysis.** Bill-drafting and budget analysis remain weak areas in the NNA's tool kit for enacting legislation. Deputies and staff still have relatively little expertise in devising legislation that is based on professional techniques and reliable analyses of their economic impact. SUNY/IDG views this persistent problem as a need that can be addressed in a concentrated manner, accessible to interested Deputies, advisory staff and the NNA's Budget Analysis and Oversight (BAO) Office. Although some training with the latter was accomplished under the current NLSP, these analytical skills should be strengthened considerably through training seminars and workshops. Our strategy, however, is to bring a critical mass of interest and practice together so that the technical capabilities in the NNA

are enhanced, the learning curve keeps turning upward, and everyday questions from Deputies and staff are answered in a consistent way.

- *Assessment.* Our approach is to conduct an assessment of current needs among NNA Deputies and committees (early 2000), offer on-going, intensive training for Deputies and staff in these two technical areas, (2000 through 2002) and pursue a "train the trainer" technique in which resident experts in the NNA will be able to continually pass on expertise in this area. Both bill-drafting and budget analysis are complex skill sets and short-term training is ineffective when considering the challenges of integrating them into practice. This activity will provide follow-through technical assistance to ensure effective use of these learned skills.
- *Strategy to bring bill-drafting and budget analysis expertise to the NNA.* In sum, SUNY/IDG proposes a training and long-term approach to this area, seeking the maximum impact for modest cost. Our COP is sufficiently familiar with the NNA leadership and the institution's capacities in these problems areas to coordinate a needs assessment, and meetings with the BAO and legislative researchers. Once the current needs are analyzed, a prime consultant will assist the SUNY/IDG team in planning a specific strategy to bring training in bill-drafting and budget analysis to desired NNA Deputies and staff. A series of training seminars and workshops will be held at available locations near, or if possible, in the NNA for Deputies and staff, using local and international experts. With our strategy operating from the onset, all training activities will contribute to a in-house curriculum on bill-drafting and budget analysis and to the formation of resident NNA experts who assume the role of trainers in these areas. SUNY/IDG proposes complementing these steps with the involvement of Nicaraguan academics whose clearly defined role will be to support technical training in these areas through voluntary workshops and presentations. Both consultants and local academics may opt to use actual NNA legislative bills and budget scenarios to teach the target material. This approach is less cumbersome and time-consuming than funding Deputy and staff enrollment in academic programs to study these two areas.

Intermediate results:

1. International consultants provide "train the trainer" seminars on budget analysis and bill-drafting techniques to NNA Deputies and staff.
2. Training in legislative bill-drafting and budget analysis reaches a broad spectrum of legislative players in the NNA, including Deputies, staff and specialized offices such as the BAO.
3. Resident , non-partisan expertise (skilled Deputies or staff) in these two areas is developed, such as in the BAO, legislative research offices and NNA committees and act as a resource to the institution.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of legislative bill-drafting training and budget analysis sessions held for NNA Deputies and staff
- Number of resident experts developed and degree of NNA staff participation
- Number and type of in-house curricula developed

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG meets with Modernization Committee and other NNA representatives to design an assessment and plan for intensive training in budget analysis and legislative bill-drafting; consultants are recruited for multi-day training seminars at or near the NNA
- Months 7 -12: Mechanism is developed to support above skill areas in NNA, resident experts, and transfer of skills to staff through an in-house curriculum
- Months 13 - 33: Continuing workshops and seminars are organized using top consultants emphasizing a "train the trainer" approach and development of in-house capacity for above skill areas

**Activity 1.4: Civil Society Organization (CSO) Directory.** This activity will support the quality of law and also promote greater opportunity for public participation in the legislative process. Through this directory, legislators will have enhanced information on and access to the many grassroots, non-profit and policy-oriented organizations that are channeling legitimate citizen demands. Nicaragua's political history and notorious socio-economic conditions have given rise to a multitude of transnational and local advocacy groups calling for change. USAID/Nicaragua has recognized the potential democratic gains from supporting CSOs (working in such areas as human rights reporting, administration of justice and violence against women) through technical assistance, capacity-building and sustainability. SUNY/IDG proposes this activity as a significant link between "supply side" and "demand side" efforts to produce effective national legislation and plans for the NNA to manage the directory at the conclusion of the ISCP program.

- *Oriented toward the legislative process.* Various lists of CSOs are currently available and SUNY/IDG will take full advantage of the extensive networks of local and international CSOs and NGOs that are active in Nicaragua. However, a master directory should be as useful as possible to legislators conducting their work. This is a timely opportunity to encourage Deputies to consult and utilize such groups in a productive manner and to help Deputies *perceive* advocacy groups as legitimate counterparts. In consultation with the NNA, the directory can be tailored to meet legislative purposes, such as: requesting information from CSOs on contact persons for legal/policy matters and branch offices in the Deputies' electoral departments; requesting information on CSOs' past and present contributions to legislative debates (such as each organization's capacity to provide input on legislation through available reports, testimony, contacts/networks and presentations). It should be noted that SUNY/IDG project staff will not only create a master list but also individually contact and analyze information from each CSO for the purposes outlined above.
- *Distribution and updating.* To facilitate contact between NNA committees and CSOs, SUNY/IDG will organize the directory of CSOs by area of interest, for presentation to each NNA committee. Committees can use the directory to contact appropriate CSOs to comment on legislation and to provide input to the legislative process. Networking is a feature of the political process; SUNY/IDG proposes to make the most of our rapport with NNA Deputies and distribute a periodically updated and politically balanced professional document to facilitate CSO access to the legislative process. The NNA's *Dirección General de Asesoría Legislativa* would eventually assume responsibility for managing the directory, which could be accessed through the institution's new data network(LMIS).

Intermediate results:

1. Through the directory, Deputies have a clearer idea of each CSO's purpose, structure, size, contact persons and capacity to support legislative debate.
2. NNA committees and Deputies use the directory to contact CSOs and to seek their input in the legislative process.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of civil society organizations included in the directory
- Depth of information obtained from CSOs that reflects capacities related to the legislative process
- Number of CSOs from the directory consulted by NNA Deputies and committees, invited to public hearings and other meetings

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 3: Planning stages of the CSO directory; collection of existing lists of CSOs, NGOS and advocacy groups; negotiation with NNA as to specific criteria for database creation and future management

- Months 3 - 6: Data collection and entry begins according to agreed-upon criteria; CSOs are contacted and information analyzed
- Months 7 - 12: Draft directory is prepared and distributed to NNA committees and Deputies; CSOs in directory are consulted for input on legislation
- Months 13 - 33: CSO updated and consulted by NNA Deputies and committees

**Activity 1.5: Deputy Orientation Program in 2001.** Deputies taking office after the 2001 elections will enter an Assembly unlike that of any of their predecessors--the public is demanding a more accountable, effective and responsive institution. The SUNY/IDG team will work with the NNA to develop workshops for new and returning Deputies. The establishment and teaching of clearer procedures increases transparency and helps to create a fair framework in which the difficult work of legislating can proceed. SUNY/IDG consultants have assisted other countries by suggesting changes to rules and procedures, and by developing manuals for bill-drafting and for job descriptions, personnel and purchasing procedures.

- *Workshops.* Workshop topics will cover administrative issues (salaries, work, location of facilities) as well as rules, procedures, use of new technology systems, bill-drafting, and best practices on bill-drafting, oversight functions, ethics, constituent relations, etc. SUNY/IDG's international consultants will team with local experts to develop and deliver this training program. Illustrative workshops are detailed below.
- *New training manual.* In cooperation NNA administrators, and to the extent that new orientation workshops "break new ground" in terms of actual procedures, a new training manual will be developed and available within the NNA for future Deputy orientations. The manual would reflect the main points of the orientation materials along with important forms, charts, listings and other data such as a guide to NNA norms. SUNY/IDG's role will be to support this particular sub-activity through covering the costs of publications and hiring consultants.
- *Retreats.* Additionally, the ISCP Program will support informal sessions for new and returning NNA Deputies simply to get acquainted. This aspect of the institution -multi-party informal gatherings- has been a particular strength of SUNY/IDG's work with the NNA's Modernization Committee. Retreats can be instrumental in cultivating the social aspect of legislators working together, and can allow friendships to grow before political constraints operate against them. This initiative may be carried out in combination with the orientation workshops, or done separately in connection with other training needs. *Ad honorem* speakers (or experts contracted by SUNY/IDG) can be recruited to give presentations on subjects of great interest across party lines.

SUNY/IDG can assist the NNA in developing a highly useful series of workshops that could be held over a three day new Deputy orientation period. These presentations would involve NNA leaders, lawyers, judges, GON officials, academic experts and experienced NNA Deputies. The following are illustrative workshops (varying from a half-hour to several hours--with time for questions and comments) that would be relatively easy to organize and palatable to different political backgrounds:

- "How My Legislative Service Has Helped Me," given by a veteran legislator, to help new members place their new roles within the context of their own goals, values and ambitions;
- "The NNA in Nicaraguan History and Society as Compared to Other Countries in the Region and the World," given by a university professor, to place legislative work in a social and historical context, discuss how the NNA is unique or similar to other legislative bodies, and to pose questions about the role of the Assembly in dealing with other GON institutions;
- "The Constitution of Nicaragua" with reference to the NNA, given by a senior judge or lawyer, to place the NNA in the specific context of the Nicaraguan

government today, with emphasis on its constitutional powers and duties;

- "Ethical Questions in the NNA," given by the chair of the Ethics Committee, to provide handouts of ethics laws and rules, stress the importance of ethical behavior for transparent democracy in the eyes of the public and discuss how and where Deputies can seek guidance when confronted with ethical dilemmas;
- "Organization of the NNA," given by a top NNA administrator, to provide basic information on the structure of the Assembly, *Junta Directiva*, committees, powers, duties and office locations of legislative services and political parties;
- "Introduction to Legislative Functions: Lawmaking," given by a panel of university faculty, current and former Deputies, and perhaps lawyers or judges, to give an overview of the constitutional framework for lawmaking, the actual lawmaking process, specific techniques for drafting legislation, and a case study on a particular piece of legislation;
- "Introduction to Legislative Functions: Budgeting," given by a panel of university faculty, Deputies and ministry officials, to give broad picture of the budget process, legal and constitutional considerations, general analytical and accounting issues, and political elements in the process. Handouts, overhead slides and flow-charts might show basic budget request forms and recent budgets;
- "Introduction to Legislative Functions: Constituent Services," given by a panel of university faculty and Deputies, to stress the importance of this legitimate function, discuss benefits to which citizens are legally entitled and debate borderline or improper requests, and discuss the various ways requests can and should be handled, refused, ignored or referred to a government agency;
- "Introduction to Legislative Functions: Oversight," given by a panel of university faculty, Deputies, staff of the NNA's Budget Analysis and Oversight Office, and appropriate GON ministry officials, to discuss the responsibility of overseeing how laws are implemented and ensuring that the bureaucracy is doing what it is supposed to do;
- "Processes in the NNA," given by NNA administrators or other senior staff member familiar with procedures, to inform new Deputies how to seek recognition, participate in plenary and committee sessions and behave in accordance with major procedural rules.
- "Issues Confronting the NNA," given by a panel of university faculty and party leaders, to introduce new Deputies to the three or four major issues that will be before the Assembly, to help them understand the substantive debate and know what background work has already been done and what agreements have already been reached;
- "Administration and Logistics," given by NNA administrators or their designates, to answer real concerns over administrative and logistical aspects of their new "job," such as how to get paid, where to park, where the telephones are, how to get copies of bills and other documents, etc.

Additional workshops or sessions:

- "Group Discussions" among participants, facilitated by NNA administrative staff or senior Deputies, to discuss questions or issues raised during the above presentations, apply some of the philosophy and theory at a practical, personal level, and posing questions on how new Deputies feel about meeting their own goals, the information flow between the NNA and other legislative bodies in the region or around the world, and whether they have new concerns about ethics issues;
- "Introduction to Staff Organizations," given by NNA administrators, perhaps with a panel of other senior staff, to help Deputies better understand staff organization, legislative services and possibly tour the office spaces physically;
- "Mock Legislative Sessions: Practice," facilitated by NNA administrators and Deputies, to engage in mock committee meetings and floor sessions, to give

Deputies practice in using procedures and equipment, perhaps using a non-controversial issue for this exercise;

- "Separate Sessions for Each Party Caucus," in which Deputies meet with their party members to go over party rules, procedures, strategies and tactics;
- "Practice Sessions," consisting of hands-on training with computer systems, meetings with different staff groups, tours of libraries, meeting rooms, to give Deputies more information on topics of specific interest to them.

Intermediate results:

1. Enhanced orientation for new and existing NNA Deputies are supported by SUNY/IDG workshops, retreats and a revised training manual.
2. New Deputies learn their responsibilities more quickly and become productive members of the NNA more quickly.
3. New services and procedures are made clear to Deputies, and informal opportunities for Deputies to meet each other will be encouraged.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of participants in and satisfaction with Deputy Orientation (through surveys)
- Number of orientation workshops developed and held by NNA administration
- Number of participants in and satisfaction with informal retreats (through surveys)
- Number of new Deputy training manuals distributed

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG meets with *Junta Directiva*, Modernization Committee and NNA administrators to establish a basic agreement as to content and format of orientation workshops, informal retreats and new Deputy orientation manual
- Months 6 - 12: Consultants work with above parties to develop workshops; SUNY/IDG project staff, in collaboration with NNA administrators, research the issues and update the information that each Deputy should know as an elected representative; one informal retreat is held with multi-party attendance and invited speaker
- Months 13 - 18: Individual orientation workshops are held on a monthly basis; after the 2001 elections a new Deputy orientation program is operational
- Months 19 - 33: Deputy orientation programs are organized according to demand

**Activity 1.6: International Conference on Legislative Strengthening; Study Tours for Deputies and Professional Staff.** Modernization programs have long benefited from international experiences in which participants (Deputies and staff) exchange perspectives and technical expertise with counterparts from other countries. Fortunately, in the case of Nicaragua, there is significant multi-party support for modernization efforts and outward-looking contacts have been made by NNA Deputies during recent years in nearly all of Latin America in that regard. Nicaragua has a unique opportunity to share its experience of gradual, national reconciliation and progress toward institutional capacity building with the global community. SUNY/IDG proposes sending a delegation from Nicaragua to a key conference below; specialized study tours are also outlined.

- *Second International Conference on Legislative Strengthening.* ISCP start-up coincides with the Second International Conference on Legislative Strengthening scheduled to be held in Maputo, Mozambique, in late February, 2000. Sponsored by USAID's Center for Democracy and Governance and organized by SUNY/IDG, this four-day conference with numerous sessions<sup>6</sup> will bring

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<sup>6</sup> The agenda for the Second International Conference on Legislative Strengthening to be held in Maputo, Mozambique, includes sessions on The Importance of the Role of Legislatures in Democratizing Countries and the Challenges they Face in Fulfilling that Role, Representation as the Fundamental Role for Democratic Legislatures, How do Political and

together many of the world's experts and practitioners in the field of strengthening legislatures. Not only will a small, politically-balanced delegation from Nicaragua benefit from the cumulative experience and current debates, but it will also bring a worthwhile case study to a focused audience to whom Nicaragua's advances can be presented and from whom valuable feedback can be obtained. Notably, the proposed ISCP program's Chief of Party, Mr. Guillermo García, will present on the new legislative information systems in the *Technology and Representation* panel. Given previous plans to support this activity under SUNY/IDG's current (NLSP) program, we propose the participation of three NNA Deputies representing Nicaragua's leadership and political spectrum (who may yet be invited to participate in conference panels). From an investment perspective, it can be said that the Nicaraguan delegation will spend 4 days among hundreds of counterparts assembled in one place to discuss specialized issues of legislative strengthening.

- *Small-scale study tour to Guatemala.* In June, 2000, four Deputies and our COP will visit the Guatemalan Congress to observe a constituent services office and legislative internship program. It has a successful, long-term legislative internship program that was begun by SUNY/IDG in 1996. The Guatemalan Congress also has a growing capacity to handle constituent casework in a professional and effective manner. Both of these elements (Activities 1.1 and 2.2) are specifically proposed in the ISCP program and a direct experience of these technical areas will galvanize support among NNA leaders.
- *Small-scale study tour to Mexico.* In late 2000, SUNY/IDG proposes an observational tour of the Mexican Congressional Library in which three Nicaraguan staff and our COP would visit the library facilities at Mexico's *Cámara de Diputados* in order to get a 'jump-start' on the archiving and indexing process for the NNA Library. SUNY/IDG currently provides technical assistance to this legislative body in the areas of legislative research, transparency in the budget process and civil service staff. At the same time, the Mexican Congress is in the process of technologically modernizing its library system and digitizing legislative and archival information. A customized, intensive visit is feasible at little cost. The programmatic benefits from this observational tour are: NNA staff see how a technologically modern library system is administrated and operated; direct transfer of knowledge occurs in the areas of what the library computer systems do and how the entire library collection is managed in a Spanish-language setting; Nicaraguan professionals gain insight into what future staffing profiles and levels are realistically needed; comparative perspective is gained on how to make the library user-friendly to Deputies, legislative research staff, academics and the general public. From an investment standpoint, SUNY/IDG is proposing this professional visit to complement and galvanize support for the activities outlined under NNA library modernization below.

Intermediate results:

1. The NNA's advances in institutional modernization are presented to a global audience at the international conference.
2. NNA leaders use these international events to better define modernization plans, learn about specific strategies, and continue momentum toward strengthening the NNA.

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Institutional Factors Affect Representation?, Conducting Legislative Assessments in Different Political Contexts, Political Will and Support for Legislative Strengthening, Building Legislative Capabilities in Mozambique, Legislative Projects in (Conflict and) Post-Conflict Societies, Developing Research and Bill-drafting Capabilities that Support the Representation Function, Developing Budget Making and Oversight Capabilities, Committees and Representation, The Roles of Parties in Legislatures, Improving Access to Decision-Making, Technology and Representation, What Roles can NGOs Play in Representing Citizen Interests?, Legislatures and Decentralization, Institutional Development in a Political Environment and Review of Key Themes, Continuing Debates, Useful Lessons and Next Steps.



3. Visits to Guatemala and Mexico provide specific input toward the implementation of the Constituent Relations Unit (CRU) (see Activity 2.2 below), Legislative Internship Program (LIP) and modernization of the library (see Activity 3.4 below)

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of Deputies to attend International Conference on Legislative Strengthening in February, 2000
- Number of participants in and satisfaction with study tours to Guatemala, Mexico (through surveys)
- Number of direct benefits gained for ISCP program activities (i.e., observation of constituent service methods, observation and study of LIP work products, plans of action for library modernization)

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 3: NNA Deputies attend international conference; plans are begun for study tours to Guatemala and Mexico
- Months 4 - 6: NNA Deputies, staff and SUNY/IDG COP visit Guatemalan Congress
- Months 7 -12: NNA library staff visit Mexican Congress and modernized library system

**B. GOAL 2: Greater opportunity for public participation in the legislative process**

This goal will be supported by the five activity areas detailed below.

**Activity 2.1: Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings.** Citizen participation in the lawmaking process serves to legitimize the legislature and help to ensure that laws meet the needs and reality of the citizenry. Public hearings, in particular, are opportunities for citizens to participate in the legislative process. By opening up the process to experts and other citizens, public hearings can also help legislators improve the quality of their decision-making. While public hearings are common in Nicaragua, there remains a need to develop specific procedures to manage them and integrate civil society groups into legislative discussions on the formal level.

The SUNY/IDG project in Mozambique provides important lessons learned on public hearings. SUNY/IDG assisted the Mozambican Assembly with hearings on nightclub age limits in 1997, and during 1998-1999 managed public hearings nationwide on ratifying a new constitution. At the same time, SUNY/IDG supported the civil society side of the equation by publishing and distributing a summary of proposed constitutional changes, and by training citizen groups in preparing testimony and in speaking at the hearings.

The NNA's experience in recent years with *cabildos abiertos* or town meetings was partly unsuccessful in that these events disintegrated into confrontations. There exists a need to effectively engage legislators and civil society groups in a productive manner; some NGOs have made inroads through successful local meetings. As Nicaraguan citizens and CSOs use more positive methods to express their positions, the NNA can offer more serious opportunities to take them all in. SUNY/IDG believes that in spite of the risks occasioned by inviting public input, the NNA will gain crucial legitimacy by instituting a mechanism to solicit public opinion in a live setting. Our strategy is to partner with an NGO to take advantage of its experience in handling successful events, while our project staff maintains a close link to the NNA. Deputies are more likely to support the opening up of legislation to civil society feedback when they take an active role in designing the "rules of the game," i.e. specific procedures.

- *Support for public hearings and citizen participation.* SUNY/IDG intends to collaborate with a local CSO experienced in civic education and public involvement in government, *Hagamos Democracia*, in the implementation of this activity. SUNY/IDG and *Hagamos Democracia* will provide technical assistance

and logistical support (in distinct areas) to Deputies and NNA committees interested in public hearings aimed at assessing the public's views. The main contributions will be in assisting committees in organizing public hearings outside Managua around topics of national interest; utilizing experts to suggest appropriate ways to open up debate to CSO representatives; developing a NNA-based mechanism to brief CSOs ahead of time on topics under consideration; documenting the results of the hearings by publishing them on the legislative management information systems and possibly the NNA web page.

As a strategy, SUNY/IDG will continue to work closely with NNA Deputies, committees and staff with respect to their participation in the hearings, assisting in the event's formal organization and logistics. *Hagamos Democracia* (and potentially other NGOs) will focus their efforts on facilitating the "demand side" of the event, making contacts with local groups, disseminating announcements about the event and acting as co-host. Initially, public hearings will be held around issues that are perceived as less controversial or politically "safe," given political support across party lines (i.e., legislative bills to improve public health services or adopt policies for eco-tourism). Civil society groups will be invited and briefed ahead of time about the issue under review and the planned location. At the hearings, opportunities for testimony and citizen input will be managed in a non-partisan, transparent and organized way, with Deputies having the opportunity to respond to questions and methods in place to prevent the deterioration of such hearings. Civil society groups and ordinary citizens will have the opportunity to listen, speak and question--just as legislators will do among themselves. Approximately 10 well-designed, issue-oriented public hearings sponsored by NNA committees can be held during the length of the Program.

- *Technical assistance to NNA committees to incorporate CSO input.* Both SUNY/IDG and *Hagamos Democracia* will support the goal of citizen participation in the context of routine NNA committee meetings. Citizen access to most committee meetings is mandated by Nicaraguan law. Support similar to the public hearings will be offered, but the focus should be on developing an acceptable means for CSO representatives to attend and participate in meetings, reaching agreements on rules for participation, and specific procedures for Deputies to request testimony, commentary or CSO presentations. While SUNY/IDG will assist development of the NNA's capacity to receive this type of input, *Hagamos Democracia* will provide constructive orientation to CSOs on committee procedures and legislative bill-drafting. As a result of this exchange, citizens' voices are heard in a formal context and Deputies may appropriately take credit for engaging the public. Committee members will see new benefits to partnering with civil society, and this improves the quality and the legitimacy of the lawmaking process. Roughly fifteen committee meetings can be enhanced in this way during the ISCP Program.
- *Documentation of results and opinions.* SUNY/IDG intends to support the dissemination of results of the above events. In the case of in-house NNA committee meetings, committee staff will retain responsibility for reporting on meetings. But in the case of public hearings held in the departments with the intention of gathering citizen input, the ISCP Program will provide resources for tape-recording the hearing's agenda items, discussions and debates. Individuals from *Hagamos Democracia* may assist in the transcription of recordings, with review, final copies and summaries to be performed by the appropriate NNA staff. SUNY/IDG will provide both the technological support (recording equipment, input of transcriptions to the NNA's database) and consulting necessary to implement this documentation and dissemination process. These results will be useful to Deputies proposing legislation, LIP interns researching national issues, and CSOs wishing to analyze the issues.

Intermediate results:

1. During the life of the project at least half of the NNA's permanent and special legislative committees hold issue-focused public hearings in

- Managua and in Nicaragua's 17 departments aimed at gathering public input.
2. Public hearings sponsored by the NNA are judged to be useful and informative by the participants and are newly recognized as an innovative mechanism to support law-making.
  3. Information on hearings is to be published and made available to the public.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of issued-focused public hearings supported by ISCP Program
- Number of NNA committee meetings receiving support related to citizen participation
- Number of CSOs participating (through attendance, testimony and commentary) in hearings
- Change in citizen's perception of NNA responsiveness (surveys)
- Number of legislative bills improved by the public hearing process
- Number of transcriptions of hearings made and distributed
- Number of public hearings and committee meetings with citizen input summarized on NNA data network or web page

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG and *Hagamos Democracia* propose a detailed plan to the Modernization Committee to jointly coordinate enhanced public hearings and committee meetings; research on CSOs and locales around Nicaragua takes place
- Months 7 - 12: One issue-focused public hearing (every 3 - 4 months) will be held by NNA Deputies and committees in Managua and in the departments, with the goal of obtaining CSO input; one issued-focused NNA committee meeting (every 3 months) will be held with significant CSO attendance and participation
- Months 13 - 33: Events above continue at a steady rate; documentation/dissemination of results follows each event; Deputies use these opportunities to gauge public support for proposed legislation

**Activity 2.2: Constituent Relations Unit (CRU).** Both NNA leaders and USAID have highlighted the area of improved constituent relations for additional technical assistance. Building on the example of successful initiatives in neighboring Central American republics, SUNY/IDG proposes the creation of a unit<sup>7</sup> within the NNA to channel private citizen and advocacy group input and requests according to established procedures. The objective is to support an explicit mechanism by which elected leaders can show more responsiveness toward their constituencies and toward the Nicaraguan public in general. A second objective is to ensure that Deputies and NNA committees take credit for thoroughly responding to inquiries, demands, complaints and ideas brought forth by the citizenry.

- *Planning stage.* In February, 2000, SUNY/IDG will meet with the Modernization Committee to present our proposed plans to support constituent services. Moreover, negotiation with and approval from the *Junta Directiva* will be necessary to launch this major component of the ISCP Program. SUNY/IDG will make presentations on how the CRU could be created, staffed and located in the framework of the NNA, and what specific services and processes would be in place, such as a hotline (for citizen contacts), referrals to other GON agencies and adequate documentation of cases. Except for certain salary costs (CRU caseworkers throughout the program), SUNY/IDG will carry the costs of the CRU office during the 33 month Program. The CRU would comprise a new entity within the NNA's organizational chart and report to the *Junta Directiva* and NNA administrative officials.

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<sup>7</sup> This unit's title may vary according to local preference, and might be expressed as *Unidad de Participacion Ciudadana*, *Oficina de Gestion* or other name.

- *Structure and functions of the CRU.* Promoted in the media through public service announcements, the Constituent Relations Unit will require a small staff consisting of a CRU Coordinator, three caseworkers and three university student interns. The three CRU interns will be selected from Nicaraguan public policy university departments. The CRU caseworkers,<sup>8</sup> assisted by interns, will forward citizen inquiries to the appropriate NNA committee, Deputy or GON branch (e.g. Ministry of Education and Culture) for consideration. Citizens will be welcomed to visit the CRU in person to make an inquiry or voice a demand, call the CRU by telephone or send electronic messages through the Internet. The promotion of this activity will be enhanced by study tours during Year 1 that demonstrate options and techniques for handling citizen requests and lobbying groups and for legislators' involvement in their constituents' dealings with other GON branches. Experience in other Central American countries revealed that departmental (or provincial) outreach offices performing similar functions are also successful investments. Looking toward future program areas, SUNY/IDG will assist the NNA in developing a plan to create such an office in a region outside Managua such as Matagalpa, Jinotega or on the Atlantic Coast.<sup>9</sup> As caseworkers follow up on contacts, Deputies interact with constituents and Nicaraguans generally sense a more responsive government, the CRU will be institutionalized based on its merits and mutual benefits. The CRU will draw on SUNY/IDG's expertise in computer systems and keep basic statistics on inquiries and responses. However, the focus will be on the success stories of Deputies' direct responsiveness and the NNA may choose to feature this work in the NNA's quarterly *Gaceta Parlamentaria* or web site.
- *Opening a CRU office in the NNA.* Handling citizen contacts is of vital importance to the strengthening of the Assembly and will require multi-partisan support of a staff that works promptly and professionally in this service area. The CRU should be physically located in the NNA and accommodate at least five workstations, a separate office for the CRU Director and access to meeting space (conferences with Deputies and committee staff, meetings with citizens, CSO representatives, GON agency representatives). Given our suggestion to re-task existing staff to fill the caseworker positions and the fact that interns will work less than full schedules, the net allocation of space from the NNA may be minimal. SUNY/IDG will present specific proposals on forms to use in logging constituent contacts, procedures to follow in order to channel and document inquiries, complaints and responses, methods to use in waiting on the public in person or via telephone and answering citizen questions on basic legislative information (from citizens who want to know the date, time and place of public hearings or who their elected representative is). For these important administrative reasons, the appropriate location of the CRU is within the Assembly's two main buildings. If negotiations determine that internal space is not available, SUNY/IDG will establish the CRU in a rental space nearby that the NNA will designate as an official NNA contact point.
- *Constituent Relations Manual.* The combination of existing NNA practices on handling citizen contacts and the new procedures proposed under the CRU will require that a clear, up-to-date version of procedures be compiled for Deputies and staff. SUNY/IDG proposes that this Manual be concise so as to facilitate its development and use before Year 2. SUNY/IDG has had positive results with local consultants who have adeptly upgraded rules and procedures in other areas of the NNA, such as the new legislative information system.

Intermediate results:

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<sup>8</sup> The object of the CRU is to institutionalize Deputies' responsiveness to their constituents. SUNY/IDG recommends that these caseworker positions be filled by existing NNA paid professional staff. While this re-tasking requires explicit agreements between the ISCP Program team and the NNA, it is cost-effective and sustainable.

<sup>9</sup> SUNY/IDG proposes to work with the NNA in the planning stage of a pilot departmental office, but recommends the implementation be carried out through an increased or separate contract.

1. The CRU is physically established within the NNA and will document and channel citizen inquiries to NNA Deputies and committees, as well as other GON branches.
2. Citizen requests are handled professionally and thoroughly, and will improve the responsiveness of NNA Deputies.
3. SUNY/IDG assists the NNA in the planning of a pilot departmental office to handle constituent relations on a local level and improve responsiveness to constituents.
4. A Constituent Relations Manual with specific procedures and best practices is prepared.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Allocation of space for CRU is made
- Number of suggestions and complaints channeled and addressed through the Constituent Relations Unit (monthly tally)
- Change in perceived responsiveness of NNA to constituent needs (surveys)
- Pilot departmental office is planned and approved by NNA *Junta Directiva*
- Numbers of Constituent Relations Manuals distributed and NNA and Deputies trained

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 3: The CRU Coordinator is identified and re-tasking of 3 staff caseworkers and recruitment of student interns begin.
- Months 4 - 6: SUNY/IDG and the NNA have agreed on an office location, and CRU office is equipped and staff is oriented
- Months 7 - 12: CRU caseworkers assisted by interns document and forward constituent inquiries to Deputies and committees; ISCP Program team begins plans for pilot departmental office; draft of Constituent Relations Manual is developed
- Months 13 -33: CRU routinely handles citizen inquires, keeps track of response data and assists in outreach activities (such as dissemination of informational materials to the public)

**Activity 2.3: NNA Outreach Activities.** Public education activities will be supported to ensure that Nicaraguans are informed regarding the functions and processes of the NNA. This area will also be supported through collaboration with local NGOs. SUNY/IDG believes that while USAID is supporting capacity-building among Nicaraguan CSOs under a separate intermediate result, institutional mechanisms that increase the interface between civil society and the NNA are also needed to engage and inform the public. SUNY/IDG will seek to conference further with USAID and the NNA during start-up to agree on a "game plan" for supporting supply and demand aspects of public participation in the legislative process.

The ISCP Program will partner with established local NGOs, including *Centro de Educación para la Democracia* and *Hagamos Democracia*, to design and implement a number of outreach activities. Partnering with these local NGOs will permit increased outreach through local schools, local capacity and sustainability. The Program will promote a variety of informational presentations about the NNA in schools, rural areas and through CSOs. Educational modules will be designed on how the NNA works, the functions of legislative commissions, and how laws are made, enacted and modified.

- *Partnering with Centro de Educación para la Democracia.* Working with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education and Culture, CED has a seven-year track record of training Nicaraguan teachers in civic issues, developing and implementing school curricula oriented toward democracy and creating student governments and national congresses on civic education. SUNY/IDG's COP will work with the NNA and CED to develop specific guidelines for carrying out educational presentations as well as overall logistics. We will also collaborate with *Hagamos Democracia* in several areas below.
  - SUNY/IDG and CED will promote and organize mock legislative assemblies in the country's high schools. CED currently has a significant portion of Nicaragua's high schools organized through *Gobiernos Estudiantiles*.

- SUNY/IDG and CED will offer civic education presentations specifically oriented toward the legislative process. These presentations will be given by CED staff, in conjunction with willing legislators, in schools and at CSO locales.
- Additionally, the ISCP Program can support the development a public service radio spot, "This Week in the Legislature," in which NNA Deputies may do their own introduction and report on recent events. Audio tapes will be sent to rural radio stations in Deputies' electoral areas. This activity will be developed in collaboration with *Hagamos Democracia*.
- Educational activities will also incorporate tours of the NNA buildings for school children and other interested groups. Visitors will be guided by NNA staff and welcomed, as available, by Deputies. Legislators can use this opportunity to explain their work, answer visitors' questions and hand out brochures.
- SUNY/IDG will confer with NNA leaders to develop support activities for the existing but sporadic weekly television shows (two broadcasts) on the NNA. Local and international consultants can be utilized here, along with NGOs listed here.
- In collaboration with *Hagamos Democracia*, the ISCP Program will also make a summary of the day's legislative session available to the media and online, as well as periodic summaries of important legislative activity.

Intermediate results:

1. Outreach activities such as civic presentations, mock legislative assemblies, summaries of daily legislative sessions and tours of the NNA increase citizens' knowledge of and interest in the work of their elected representatives.
1. Radio spots and television broadcasts offer Deputies the opportunity to explain their work and reach more citizens.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of mock legislative assemblies held in Nicaraguan high schools
- Number of civic education presentations made in schools and CSO locales
- Number of radio spots with Deputies produced and broadcast around the country
- Number of tours of NNA by visitors and school groups
- Number of television spots with Deputies produced and broadcast around the country
- Daily legislative summaries disseminated to media

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG's COP meets with NGOs, USAID and the NNA Modernization Committee to develop a plan for such presentations, mock assemblies, tours and outreach via the media; plan for outreach activities is approved
- Months 7 - 12: SUNY/IDG and NGOs develop format for each type of event and begin to implement activities
- Months 13 - 33: Outreach activities outlined above are carried out and results are reported to SUNY/IDG and the Modernization Committee on a quarterly basis; activities are written up in the NNA's *Gaceta Parlamentaria*; weekly radio shows are recorded and periodic television spots are produced

**Activity 2.4: Development and Dissemination of Informational Materials about the NNA and its Functions.** Publications to inform and educate Nicaraguans about the NNA exist, but need funding for improved design and distribution. Until recently, limited budgets prevented the NNA's quarterly bulletin from appearing regularly. With input provided by the SUNY/IDG team and *Hagamos Democracia*, assistance in developing and disseminating informational materials will be provided.

- *Types of publications and their distribution.* SUNY/IDG and *Hagamos Democracia* will carefully examine the current state of printed outreach

materials and plan several types of complementary work: new types of outreach publications for children and high-schoolers, updated contact information on Deputies and committees, and new publications to explain in creative ways the legislative process. This activity will a packet for legislators to use when making presentations and a version of *Conozcamos Nuestra Asamblea Legislativa (Let's Get to Know Our Assembly)*. This will be a children's book about the NNA, written in basic education format also permitting use by adults in low-literacy households. It is aimed at reaching ordinary Nicaraguans with the message that NNA Deputies are ready to listen to them. Deputies will be challenged to become instructors about their profession, and will be more aware of the legislature's services. NNA deputies will be able to distribute these well-designed materials to their constituents, and their educational, descriptive format makes them ideal for incorporation in the NNA web site.

Intermediate results:

1. Technical assistance is provided to the NNA in improved informational materials, including a children's book and brochures.
2. Materials are distributed through outreach programs and by Deputies.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Numbers of *Conozcamos Nuestra Asamblea Legislativa* published and distributed to schools and CSOs
- Number of brochures designed and published
- Numbers of Deputies who distribute informational materials in their electoral departments or at NNA tours

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG project staff and *Hagamos Democracia* review existing materials and develop new generation of outreach materials
- Months 7 - 12: New materials are drafted and submitted to the NNA Modernization Committee for approval; books and brochures are published
- Months 13 - 33: NNA Deputies, SUNY/IDG staff and *Hagamos Democracia* distribute new materials

**Activity 2.5: Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training.** NNA Deputies have requested SUNY/IDG assistance in promoting more effective relationships with journalists and other members of the media. Deputies are often not trained in dealing with the media, conducting press conferences, or holding public meetings. The press in Nicaragua is particularly aggressive and sensationalistic in its reporting on the NNA; Deputies also wish the press was more informed about how it works. The SUNY/IDG project in Chile conducted regular "off the record" breakfasts for legislators and members of the press. These background meetings brought together congressional leaders and the press corps to discuss issues of interest to either party, and provided for a free exchange of views. SUNY/IDG proposes strengthening activities in press relations and will work with *Fundacion Violeta de Chamorro (FVC)*, a local NGO specifically devoted to democratic culture, freedom of expression and promotion of public participation in the resolution of national problems. FVC has a track record of supporting leadership in journalism and a strong, free and pluralist press corps.

- *Technical Assistance to the NNA's Dissemination and Press Division.* SUNY/IDG anticipates playing a helpful role in assisting this area of the NNA which will be an important and welcome partner in this activity. International consultants in press relations will be brought in to advise on alternatives for equipment, work processes and staff training. SUNY/IDG will also provide needed development of a digital image system, storage and release of same to the media (technological aspect of modernization of press relations).
- *Background breakfasts.* In the ISCP Program, SUNY/IDG will organize informal breakfasts for press and legislators for "off the record", background discussions. SUNY/IDG and FVC will host these events to which both

journalists covering the NNA and Deputies will be invited. Using a panel or mediator, both sides can discuss their difficulties and perceptions in media work. To encourage an open discussion, strict rules can be employed to ensure that these "off the record" meetings are not to be reported on by any participant.

- *Town meetings involving Deputies and members of the media.* Also contributing to the level and quality of exchange, SUNY/IDG and FVC will support town meetings, known in Central America as *cabildos abiertos*, in which Deputies from a particular department (and in this case, media professionals) discuss items on the current legislative agenda. *The cabildos abiertos* will be public but will ideally have an informal ambience, where a mediator can manage a debate and multiple discussants can contribute to debates that. SUNY/IDG will develop a plan early on to ensure Deputy participation (by stating benefits to be gained, such as media exposure, perception of authenticity and legitimacy, opportunity to build a public image) and will rely on FVC's experience and credibility in hosting these town meetings. Approximately nine, well-orchestrated *cabildos abiertos* will occur during the ISCP Program.
- *Training workshops.* Training will be provided on both (Deputy and press) sides, and SUNY/IDG will work more closely with Deputies while FVC's strengths are focused on the media's needs. A training module on media relations will be created for this purpose and later incorporated into the Deputy orientation curriculum. Topics can range from gracefully accepting/refusing interviews, managing news sources, editorials, public information law and dealing with controversial topics. In addition, the press will be invited to participate in training on the functions and processes of the NNA. In this way, members of the media learn the facts about the legislative process, make-up of the Assembly, Deputies' ability to comment on pending actions and appropriate steps for repeated inquiries. Consultants will be utilized in both cases, and FVC will focus its efforts on interfacing with media groups.

Intermediate results:

1. More frequent, substantive contact between legislators and the media take place as journalists better understand the NNA and report on it more accurately.
2. Better press coverage provides a greater opportunity for citizens to understand the workings of the NNA and their legislative role.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Numbers of background breakfasts held and number of participants
- Numbers of training workshops on press relations held for Deputies
- Number of seminars about the NNA held for members of the media and number of participants
- Number of *cabildos abiertos* (town meetings) held in which Deputies and the press hold public discussions

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG, Fundacion Violeta de Chamorro and the NNA Modernization Committee agree on a series of breakfasts, seminars/workshops, technical assistance to the NNA's Dissemination and Press Division, and town meetings
- Months 7 - 12: The first informal breakfasts, seminars and town meetings are held, and the NNA's press area receives technical assistance from SUNY/IDG in press relations
- Months 13 - 33: Informal press/NNA breakfasts, seminars and town meetings are periodically organized

**C. GOAL 3: Institutionalization of the modernization process within the NNA**

This goal will be supported by the five activity areas detailed below.



**Activity 3.1: Power Plants, Network Extension and Public Access Workstations: Follow-on Components to the New Information System.** USAID's existing fixed price deliverable contract with SUNY/IDG has supported the building of a data network for the NNA using the latest technology. There are several actions needed to consolidate this work, and SUNY/IDG has skilled technical staff who can oversee the implementation of these actions.

- *Power plants.* The NNA office complexes in the *Palacio Legislativo* and *Banco de America* buildings suffer from frequent power outages that disrupt the work of hundreds of professional staff. Efficiency and effectiveness are obviously an issue. Electrical power plants to supply a constant flow of energy would solve this problem. SUNY/IDG possesses a solid grasp of this problem and has an able technical staff with engineering expertise. Upgrades to the electrical power plant will be performed in both buildings to the degree permitted by funding.
- *Data network expansion.* Given the financial limitations of SUNY/IDG's current Fixed-Price Deliverables Contract,<sup>10</sup> logical steps to bring the network to different branches of the NNA are still needed. Data network extension is needed to accommodate all legislative committee spaces, *Bancadas* (political parties) and new legislative service areas. The latter will include the newly created CRU/LIP office, the modernized legislative library, service points for Deputies and a *Virtual Office* for their laptops (see Activity 3.2 below), and work stations. Linking these additional service points will allow the new data network to be more fully utilized and politically legitimized. One of the main programmatic benefits to be gained is that individual Deputies would finally have access to the legislative management information systems (LMIS). Because the NNA currently has little or no office space for individual Deputies, the latter have no way to take advantage of the LMIS. It is important to guarantee Deputies' access to information -especially on the physical premises of the institution. To date, most of the network points already installed serve existing NNA offices, committees and administrative areas but unfortunately do not accommodate Deputies as a whole.
- *Public Access Workstations/ CPU.* These strategically located, public computer workstations would be oriented toward learning about and interacting with the NNA and would be implemented in conjunction with the Citizen Participation Unit (CPU). In these workstations, Nicaraguan citizens will be encouraged to log in to the web site and public areas of the NNA's data network. Such computer workstations will be carefully designed to complement the other activities related to the CPU, and will cover Managua and the country's departments. As a place where current information on the NNA is showcased, the promotional value and outreach potential of this service is great.

Intermediate results:

1. Power plants are installed in the Banco de America and Palacio Legislativo to ensure uninterrupted use of the new information systems.
2. Network extension accommodates needed service points in the NNA environment.
3. Public access is promoted and enhanced through computer workstations.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Productivity of NNA Deputy and staff (number of work-hours) enhanced through power plant installation (survey)
- Number of additional network extension points created and public workstations available
- Number of public access workstations installed and number/frequency of users

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<sup>10</sup> The structured cable data network installed by SUNY/IDG was developed to the fullest extent possible within a finite budget. In spite of significant delays caused by Hurricane Mitch, the construction of the network was completed during the summer of 1999 and inaugurated in October, 1999. The SUNY/IDG technical team has developed specific follow-on steps to complete the network that were not fundable through the current program.

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: Power plants designed and network extensions planned in coordination with NNA; SUNY/IDG researches locations and specific installation needs for public access workstations
- Months 7 - 12: Acquisition of power plant equipment; materials acquired and work begins to add network points to the LMIS;
- Months 13 - 24: Power plants are installed; network extension is complete; SUNY/IDG project staff travel to various sites to install public access workstations

**Activity 3.2: NNA Deputies' Virtual Office.** Unthinkable in North America, most NNA Deputies have no offices or equipment provided by the institution. A new building to house NNA offices was planned but has not been built. The institution has a cutting-edge data network (LMIS) available but a very sparse and uneven distribution of computer workstations among Deputies. SUNY/IDG recognizes that the lack of basic resources for legislators is a larger issue for the Nicaraguan government to address. However, these infrastructure obstacles can be mitigated to some extent through a few basic steps.

- *Identify equipment donor.* SUNY/IDG recommends that a corporate donor be found to provide laptop computers under a separate but related initiative.<sup>11</sup> Although the equipment needed for all 92 Deputies involves a significant financial investment, this arrangement will be an ideal donation for a major computer manufacturer due to the profile of the receiving institution and the potential for multiplying the effects of the donation. Solid arguments can be made for this laptop initiative, since the NNA does not have individual offices available to Deputies and the latter still have limited access to the new LMIS.
- *Laptops equipped for NNA Deputies.* The ISCP Program will offer customized software and training to all 92 Deputies so that routine office tasks and communication is made easier. SUNY/IDG's project staff have already developed a prototype of a desk-top software package for Deputies, including word processing, spreadsheet capability, fax/modem, email, agendas, etc. Eager and motivated to use this resource, Deputies will have a powerful tool to perform office tasks and access the NNA's new LMIS. Because connection to the NNA's LMIS will be easy, the existence of laptops will also make a difference in Deputies' learning curves with regard to the new legislative systems for passing legislation. SUNY/IDG can arrange to have remote dial-up access to the LMIS for these authorized users.
- *Benefits to legislative work.* Like other activities proposed here, the benefits of personal computers extend beyond technological efficiency to include accessibility and improved performance of legislative work. Having a range of typical office services at their disposal -in the form of a customized software and desk-top settings- permits greater access to information (legislative bills, agenda, libraries, other parliaments) and enhanced accessibility (E-mail, committee news and agendas). This step forward will be seen as meeting a basic need among Deputies, who are simultaneously being invited and challenged to use legislative bill tracking, motions and agenda systems. Individual legislators need more computer-based capacities such as this to facilitate their work, access current information and respond quickly to their colleagues and constituents.

Intermediate results:

1. A donor is identified in order to meet the equipment and standard software needs of the Virtual Office.

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<sup>11</sup> SUNY/IDG suggests that an alternate donor, such as a corporate donors (IBM, Dell, Texas Instruments, Sony, etc.), be found to donate the necessary equipment to meet this important and high-profile need. SUNY/IDG's COP and home office staff will make every effort to solicit corporate donations of laptop computers for the Deputies.

2. SUNY/IDG implements a customized software package on each laptop computer oriented toward legislative work.
3. Deputies use laptops in their daily work, gaining access to the new LMIS wherever they are and at any time.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Donor identified for equipment needs of Virtual office
- Number of Deputies equipped with laptop computers to aid in legislative work
- Number and frequency of Deputies accessing LMIS through laptops

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG identifies a donor of laptop computers for NNA Deputies; customized software package for legislative work is prepared
- Months 7 - 12: Laptops are donated to NNA, customized software is installed to meet the needs of the Virtual Office; laptops are distributed to NNA Deputies
- Months 13 - 33: Deputies use laptops as versatile office tools, access the LMIS and utilize network connection points while in NNA buildings

**Activity 3.3: Design and Implementation of a NNA Training Center.** NNA leaders have identified this component as a priority. The lack of an auditorium or any appropriately equipped space has affected the development of quality training activities within the NNA. Recently, new demands for computer training have been awkwardly addressed given the lack of workstations and facilities conducive to training. Training has been carried out in areas external to the NNA on a loan basis.

- *NNA provides appropriate space.* To implement this activity, the NNA must commit to provide appropriate renovated space in the *Palacio Legislativo* or *Banco de América* buildings or in some other nearby building. In an area that accommodates furniture for roughly 20-25 people, SUNY/IDG will equip the space to allow a wide range of training activities.
- *SUNY/IDG provides training equipment.* Our technical team will work with the advantage of familiarity with the NNA's needs, learning levels and tastes. Our close working relationship with Deputies will also help the Training Center to be fully utilized. The Center will be equipped with desks, chairs, sound equipment, a multimedia projector, television and video recorder/player, dimming lights, network connections and a series of computer workstations. Catering to wider range of needs than just the SUNY/IDG's project, training activities will fully utilize these resources. As a convenient, professional resource, the Center will bring costs savings to both the ISCP Program's activities and future NNA training. This initiative should be viewed as sustainable, since the future need for a training area for NNA staff and Deputies is certain.
- *Programmatic benefits.* Through the NNA's allocation of space and SUNY/IDG's design and installation of equipment, training needs can be met in a more effective and efficient way at the Training Center. Staff development will be available in an enhanced environment, and this new resource will rarely stand idle. NNA committees and support offices will be able to reserve the Center for their particular training needs, and the facility will offer a high standard in terms of technology and organization. Importantly, the institution will have a powerful, centralized means to communicate upgrades or updates of NNA policies, procedures and systems to those working at the NNA.

Intermediate results:

1. NNA allocates appropriately renovated space for Training Center.
2. SUNY/IDG acquires equipment and furniture to be used at the Training Center.

3. Specific training needs are met in an efficient way, and the Center is made available to a broad spectrum of NNA users.

Indicators to measure progress:

- NNA space allocated and renovated as necessary
- Number of equipment items purchased and installed
- Number and frequency of training sessions held at Center
- Spectrum of NNA offices and staff using the Center (surveys)

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: SUNY/IDG team meets with NNA leaders on this initiative and discuss the location, design, and implementation of the Training Center; NNA identifies location for Training Center
- Months 7 - 12: SUNY/IDG technical experts, among them the COP, will plan the acquisition of required equipment; NNA renovates space as necessary
- Months 13 - 33: Installation of equipment, furniture and (LMIS) network connection points is done; Training Center is inaugurated and use begins

**Activity 3.4: Modernization of the NNA's Javier Aviles Legislative Library.** This component represents an important investment in the NNA's resources and each Deputy's capabilities for analyzing legislation. Previous initiatives have attempted and failed to introduce software to manage the 10,000-volume collection, and the facility still operates using a card catalogue (Dewey) classification system. Library staff continue to handle matters manually. Several earlier projects such as microfilming were tried but the equipment is now inoperative, and only two out-dated computers are currently used.

SUNY/IDG proposes a series of transformations that move beyond a technology upgrade to include NNA Deputy utilization, greater access and projecting the legislative library as a dynamic entity to society. The SUNY/IDG team will seek a strong working relationship with the library staff and is positioned to make the most of the NNA's new computer network through links to this and other library collections.

- *Modernization of library management equipment.* After an assessment stage including library staff, a strategic plan will be drawn up to modernize the legislative library's infrastructure. SUNY/IDG will equip the library with computers, software, printers, bar codes readers and printers, scanners, and photocopiers to make a modern library system available to legislative staff, expert researchers and the public. Essentially, a modern and convenient system for cataloguing, storage and inventory of the collection will emerge, and with minimal effort the library can project a more active, inviting image toward society.
- *Library staff training.* Among alternatives to train staff in the new systems, SUNY/IDG recommends bringing a series of seasoned experts from Latin American countries and the US who can provide training seminars in modern library systems. Local training of existing staff will be accomplished through workshops given by these visiting consultants and local ones as well. The study tour outlined in Activity 1.6 above has the specific purpose of training library professionals in new systems and galvanizing internal support for major changes. Connections with other library resources worldwide can also be designed. Looking toward the future, the ISCP Program could explore alternatives such as arranging for Nicaraguan students or staff to complete coursework in Library and Information Science as part of a Master's program in the United States<sup>12</sup> or other locations such

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<sup>12</sup> The University at Albany, one of SUNY's four main university centers, is located in the state capital and offers top-notch programs in Library Science. While not specifically proposed here, SUNY/IDG recommends that USAID and NNA leaders discuss the prospect of an exchange in this area. English-proficient Nicaraguan students would take

as Lima, Peru or Santiago, Chile. Given SUNY/IDG's strength in information technology and the emphasis placed on staff training through consultancies and a study tour, this initiative could succeed where previous ones have fallen short.

- *Programmatic benefits.* Working sensitively with existing staff, the ISCP Program will help to modernize the *Javier Aviles Legislative Library* through major technological upgrades that will make library management and expansion more efficient and user access vastly more convenient. Importantly, legislative research capabilities will be enhanced for the NNA, the academic community and the general public. SUNY/IDG will provide the tools and support the initial phase of transferring the library's collection to a new bar-coded, computerized system that may be linked to the NNA's new computer network. As a result, over time the library collection may be accessible through the LMIS, bringing added efficiency to legislative work.

Intermediate results:

1. A strategic plan to modernize the NNA library is made, including modernization of equipment and training.
2. Training activities, ranging from a study tour to locally held workshops and seminars, are offered to NNA library staff.
3. SUNY/IDG assists in a major technological upgrade of the library system, and the new library is more useful to legislative researchers and more efficient.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of users of computerized library system
- Number of participants in study tour to Mexican Congressional Library
- Number of workshops/seminars held for library staff on new library technology
- Number of users and satisfaction with new system (surveys)
- Quality of legislative research and access to collections enhanced (surveys)

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 12: The ISCP team develops a strategic plan to modernize library functions, plan for equipment purchases, and hold mutually informative meetings with library staff during Year 1; library staff goes on study tour to Mexico
- Months 13 - 33: SUNY/IDG purchases equipment and finalizes procedures for upgrading (automating) the library system; library collection begins to be coded using the new technology; training seminars are in full swing

**Activity 3.5. Digital Archive for NNA.** This initiative will allow the NNA to have an on-line, real time digitized document archive and will address inefficiencies that presently characterize legislative work. Deputies frequently request copies of archived laws, supporting documents for legislative bills and related reports. This is a constant bottleneck because the archives in general are poorly filed and documents are often out of order or incomplete--causing frustration and down time spent looking for files. A digital archive will help NNA Deputies and staff find such information quickly and in complete form, and may later be linked to the NNA web site for use by historians, policy analysts, the press and the public in general.

- *Digital archive functions and benefits.* SUNY/IDG has done preliminary research on hardware and software requirements, and has developed a general strategy for the digitalization of NNA documents, document ordering, technical processing, and training for relevant staff. Equipment will be purchased that will allow trained staff to scan documents on a routine

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courses or complete programs at the University, in combination with internships at the New York State Legislature and Senate Library.

basis. The digital archive system can automate the storing of legislative information (e.g. new laws) in the digital archive, handle Deputy and staff questions about the archive and offer a user-friendly, indexed format for users. Our technical team will design and construct a digitalization area in the NNA to handle priority documents (legislative bills, enacted law, reports). A worthwhile investment, the scanning activities themselves and system maintenance relating to the digitized document archive will need to separately funded by the NNA. To the extent possible, SUNY/IDG will work with and train existing archive's staff. A digitized document archive will bring needed simplicity and efficiency to everyday legislative work. Deputies and staff will access complete, instantaneous information through NNA computer workstations linked to the archive's file server. The flow of legislative bills, motions and decrees can be converted to this medium, providing for a more reliable, convenient service within the NNA.

Intermediate results:

1. A digital archive is added to the NNA's LMIS, giving Deputies nearly instant and complete access to key information needed to analyze legislation.

Indicators to measure progress:

- Number of documents digitally archived
- Number of digital archives used by NNA and external counterparts
- Number of legislative analyses or studies made using the digital archive

Proposed time-line:

- Months 1 - 6: A needs assessment is carried out and preliminary designs for the new digital archive system are drawn up
- Months 7 - 12: Digital archive equipment is purchased; preliminary processing of key documents begins
- Months 13 - 33: Digital processing of documents continues; new legislation is automatically fed into the digital archive

*SUNY/IDG can carry out the above activities within a 33 month period beginning February 1, 2000. Many of the activities proposed have emerged from having worked with the NNA over the last two-plus years. This means that among NNA Deputies there is significant interest in moving ahead on these fronts, and the SUNY/IDG team has the advantage of having seen the anticipated needs up close. However, the implementation team will respond to changing demands, and can readjust activities or replace them with various others as needed. Quarterly evaluations will provide the opportunity to refocus efforts if necessary. The First Year Workplan is attached as Annex B.*

*Moreover, during the optional fourth year of the Program, USAID and the NNA may opt to implement further program activities that have been under consideration. These initiatives include additional departmental legislative outreach offices, local/national government legislative issues, legislative exchanges and academic programs in the U.S or other countries, supporting specialized legislative studies programs at Nicaraguan universities, partnerships with other NGOs, activities focused on post-Mitch reconstruction and other emerging areas.*

**D. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**

In order to effectively report to USAID on the results of the ISCP Program, SUNY/IDG proposes a monitoring and evaluation strategy. SUNY/IDG will track inputs, outputs, activities, results, and data collection methods to cover the period of the contract. Quarterly reports will be submitted to USAID, along with an annual report at the conclusion of year one, year two, and a final report at the conclusion of year three. A monitoring and evaluation expert will be hired for short consultancies at the onset of the ISCP Program and at the conclusion of Year one, to review general progress toward these goals:

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

In cooperation with SUNY/IDG and USAID, the expert will also review specific progress along the indicators associated with each activity area:

- Number of *estudios de antecedentes* (legislative studies) requested by the NNA and prepared by ISCP interns
- Number of university counterparts consulted and local experts utilized in ISCP legislative studies
- Number of ISCP legislative studies referenced by NNA committees and Deputies in debating and proposing legislation
- Number of experts included in the expert database and frequency of updates
- Number of laws developed with the support of local and international technical experts from the database
- Number of legislative bill-drafting training and budget analysis sessions held for NNA Deputies and staff
- Number of resident experts developed and degree of NNA staff participation
- Number and type of in-house curricula developed
- Number of civil society organizations included in the directory
- Depth of information obtained from CSOs that reflects capacities related to the legislative process
- Number of CSOs from the directory consulted by NNA Deputies and committees, invited to public hearings and other meetings
- Number of participants in and satisfaction with Deputy Orientation (through surveys)
- Number of orientation workshops developed and held by NNA administration
- Number of participants in and satisfaction with informal retreats (through surveys)
- Number of new Deputy training manuals distributed
- Number of Deputies to attend International Conference on Legislative Strengthening in February, 2000
- Number of participants in and satisfaction with study tours to Guatemala and Mexico (through surveys)
- Number of direct benefits gained for ISCP program activities (i.e., observation of constituent service methods, observation and study of LIP work products, plans of action for library modernization)
- Number of issued-focused public hearings supported by ISCP Program
- Number of NNA committee meetings receiving support related to citizen participation
- Number of CSOs participating (through attendance, testimony and commentary) in hearings
- Change in citizens' perception of NNA responsiveness (surveys)
- Number of legislative bills improved by the public hearing process
- Number of transcriptions of hearings made and distributed
- Number of public hearings and committee meetings with citizen input summarized on NNA data network or web page
- Allocation of space for CRU is made
- Number of suggestions and complaints channeled and addressed through the Constituent Relations Unit (monthly tally)
- Change in perceived responsiveness of NNA to constituent needs (surveys)

- Pilot departmental office is planned and approved by NNA *Junta Directiva*
- Numbers of Constituent Relations Manuals distributed and NNA and Deputies trained
- Number of mock legislative assemblies held in Nicaraguan high schools
- Number of civic education presentations made in schools and CSO locales
- Number of radio spots with Deputies produced and broadcast around the country
- Number of tours of NNA by visitors and school groups
- Number of television spots with Deputies produced and broadcast around the country
- Daily legislative summaries disseminated to media
- Numbers of *Conozcamos Nuestra Asamblea Legislativa* published and distributed to schools and CSOs
- Number of brochures designed and published
- Numbers of Deputies who distribute informational materials in their electoral departments or at NNA tours
- Numbers of background breakfasts held and number of participants
- Numbers of training workshops on press relations held for Deputies
- Number of seminars about the NNA held for members of the media and number of participants
- Number of *cabildos abiertos* (town meetings) held in which Deputies and the press hold public discussions
- Productivity of NNA Deputy and staff (number of work-hours) enhanced through power plant installation (survey)
- Number of additional network extension points created and public workstations available
- Number of public access workstations installed and number/frequency of users
- Donor identified for equipment needs of Virtual Office
- Number of Deputies equipped with laptop computers to aid in legislative work
- Number and frequency of Deputies accessing LMIS through laptops
- NNA space allocated and renovated as necessary
- Number of equipment items purchased and installed
- Number and frequency of training sessions held at Center
- Spectrum of NNA offices and staff using the Center (surveys)
- Number of users of computerized library system
- Number of participants in study tour to Mexican Congressional Library
- Number of workshops/seminars held for library staff on new library technology
- Number of users and satisfaction with new system (surveys)
- Quality of legislative research and access to collections enhanced (surveys)
- Number of documents digitally archived
- Number of digital archives used by NNA and external counterparts
- Number of legislative analyses or studies made using the digital archive

Monitoring the ISCP Program's progress toward these indicators will provide the SUNY/IDG team and USAID with useful information. However, the Program's advances will be reported to USAID in narrative form as well in order to convey the context and evolution of all the activities. SUNY/IDG will also report on how these indicators relate to the USAID Mission's current and future benchmarks for good governance in Nicaragua, sustainability concerns and the degree of institutionalization achieved with the NNA. Our COP, project staff and home office personnel have adopted a goal of client satisfaction and will



respond to the concerns of USAID and the NNA. Continual monitoring and evaluation will enable the ISCP Program to adjust to changes in circumstances, needs and client priorities.

#### **E. Sustainability**

Modernization efforts need to take hold after the technical assistance phase has finished. How will the modernization process in the NNA be sustained? SUNY/IDG believes that the most important factors in sustainability are galvanizing political will and motivation among legislators, planning for institutionalization of activities during the length of the Program, building incentives into the initiatives proposed and respecting resource limitations in the host country.

As a calculated investment, the study tours are a powerful means to build support for the modernization process in the NNA. Deputies and top staffers will have tangible results to work with, such as relationships and contacts in neighboring Central American and Mexican institutions. The combination of initiatives in Nicaragua and personal observations of other legislative contexts will yield a stronger commitment to the modernization agenda among Deputies. SUNY/IDG holds that this commitment is fundamental to the long-term integration of new services, practices and relationships. Just as important as external donor support, internal political support from a broad range of legislators gives the institution a chance to win major changes.

Our proposed activities bring needed infrastructure, services and staff training in ways that allow them to be operational and manageable after sponsor support recedes. A modest number of well-equipped professional staff from the ISCP Program can transition to a certain future in the NNA if their functions and value are demonstrated. Likewise, SUNY/IDG will seek the NNA leaderships' continual, official commitment to a modernization agenda. Initiatives such as engaging the public through improved public hearings and channeling public inquiries and demands to Nicaragua's elected leaders will require the NNA's formal commitment.

The ISCP Program's activities are designed to offer significant benefits to the NNA and to the Nicaraguan people. Deputies and committees will have an improved mechanism to deal with their constituents, vast improvements in in-house resources, and numerous opportunities for interacting with top consultants. The ISCP Program offers marked improvements in everyday efficiency which legislators will clearly notice. Perhaps most important to legislators, these activities can lead to an improved public image among the Nicaraguan people and an increase in the perception of legitimacy.

Finally, sustainability is achieved by modest design. SUNY/IDG has developed activity areas that can live on without massive funding from sponsors in the future. Instead of creating large numbers of staff which the NNA would have to fund or abandon after the Program ends, only a few new positions are proposed. In that respect, we recommend that the NNA fills some of these positions during the Program by re-tasking existing paid staff. Similarly, using an established NGO for an activity area (civic education) helps for the real changes to reside in Nicaraguan society and not merely in an externally funded project office. Institutionalization of best practices is also helped by asking for the NNA to contribute resources up front (renovated space, re-tasking existing personnel, formal written procedures) and to try out new services and practices (responsiveness to constituents and improved public hearings).

Overall, the ISCP Program design aims to maximize the improvement of the NNA's infrastructure, while at the same time it endeavors to keep the future cost of staff and system maintenance as low as possible.

**Appendix 2: SUNY/IDG Year 1 Work Plan (February 1, 2000- January 31, 2001)**

# **Year 1 Work Plan**

## **Institutional Strengthening and Citizen Participation Program (ISCP) for the Nicaraguan National Assembly (NNA)**

USAID/RFSUNY/NNA  
USAID Contract No. 524-C-00-00-00032-00

March 15, 2000

The purpose of this program is to provide technical assistance to the Nicaraguan National Assembly (NNA) in reinforcing legislators' capability to enact legislation and to build mutually accepted channels for citizen input in national legislation and debate. The USAID Mission's Strategic Objective (SO) stresses support for *More political participation, transparency and compromise* and the Intermediate Results *Legislature addresses key national issues* and *Government decision-making based on greater citizen participation*.

This Year 1 Work Plan describes the activities and benchmarks that SUNY/IDG expects to achieve during the first year of the program. The Work Plan is organized by major goal areas and activities as laid out in the Statement of Work in the above referenced contract. A table is attached reflecting the program's results framework.

The program involves 16 activity areas among three overall goals, as presented below:

### **I. ISCP Program Outline**

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

Activities:

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

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

Activities:

- 2.1 Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings

- 2.2 Constituent Relations Unit (CRU)
- 2.3 NNA Outreach Activities
- 2.4 Development and Dissemination of Informational Materials about the NNA and its Functions
- 2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training

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

Activities:

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

## **II. ISCP Work Plan by Goal Area and Activity**

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

**1.1 Legislative Internship Program (LIP).** SUNY/IDG is already in the planning stage of this component, and is considering various individuals to serve as LIP Coordinator, mentors and interns. Given space considerations in the NNA and the advantages of distancing this unit from the everyday culture of the Assembly, the LIP will be housed initially at the SUNY/IDG Project Office in Reparto Los Robles. SUNY/IDG has already met with representatives from several universities in Nicaragua (UAM, Universidad de Mobile) who are helping in terms of identifying recruits for the LIP. There is also an interest in locating legislation-oriented interactive computer workstations in these universities as a way to promote legislative studies and careers. One of the themes that has emerged is the importance of maintaining the neutrality of this program and recruiting individuals with “thick skin” who can provide an objective, legislative research service in a highly political environment.

In the first half of Year 1, consultants will be used to assist the organization of the LIP office and present this initiative in detail to the Assembly- explaining its role, purpose and strategy. When each staff member of the LIP has been identified, the COP will present a plan as to how the LIP shall operate, and the Technical Council, mentors and interns will receive an orientation accordingly. By Months 7 – 9, assignments for background studies should begin. In recent discussions, the possibility of having the LIP deal with requests from NNA committees (and not from Deputies in general) was raised, as a more effective and efficient mode of operation. Since the goal is to provide a quality, non-partisan research service to the NNA for developing legislation, steps will be taken to maximize the information sources available to interns, minimize partisan influences on their studies, and convince the Assembly of the value of this process. By the close of Year 1, approximately 5 – 10 studies will have been completed and presented to the requesting party.

**1.2 Database of Local and International Experts to Draft Reports and Testify Before Committees.** SUNY/IDG’s project staff are already developing a strategy to gather pertinent information and distribute results to NNA committees and Deputies. By the end of Month 3, a draft version of the database will be published, and the SUNY/IDG project staff will continue to update the database periodically. Two local consultants will be used to spearhead the networking and data collection on experts whose knowledge or research are relevant to the legislative process. The computerized database will contain various fields which facilitate searches by consultant name, topic, availability and other criteria. By Month 6, it is anticipated that the database will be consulted by NNA committees and Deputies and will expose the latter to experts from a wide

political spectrum. For convenience, hard copies of the database should be distributed in the NNA. To maximize the development of this tool, SUNY/IDG will manage this initiative during the ISCP Program and transfer same to the appropriate authority in the NNA (Legislative Advisory Office) at the conclusion of the program. Thus, by the end of Year 1 the expert database is developed and used by various actors in the Assembly.

**1.3 Intensive Training for NNA Deputies and Staff in Legislative Bill-Drafting and Budget Analysis.** This initiative depends heavily on international consultants who are able to teach skills in these two areas, but also depends on the Assembly's will to promote these skills in the form of resident experts or trainers (incipient stage of a neutral, permanent legislative service bureau). SUNY/IDG recommends that the NNA designate several (2 – 4) experienced staff members who wish to have careers in legislative service that are independent of political appointment or orientation. These individuals would become the institution's trainers with regard to bill-drafting and budget analysis, areas in which the NNA as a whole requires improvement. During Months 1- 6 an assessment of these areas will be conducted by SUNY/IDG with the assistance of an international expert, staff are identified for future trainer positions and a training plan is presented to the Assembly. During the second half of Year 1, a series of seminars and workshops are held pursuant to the overall plan to transfer skills to NNA committees, Deputies and staff.

**1.4 Civil Society Organization (CSO) Directory.** This activity addresses supply side/demand side coordination in support of effective national legislation. SUNY/IDG recognizes the broad range of not-for-profit, grassroots and other civil society organizations who have much to contribute to national problem-solving and legislative debates. Consistent with the contract's Work Statement, SUNY/IDG will produce a unified and updated master list of CSOs that is tailored to the needs of Deputies. During the first quarter of Year 1, existing lists will be compiled and design issues will be explored. During the second quarter, information on CSOs is gathered through intensive methods by project staff. Well before the close of Year 1, a draft directory is prepared and is accessible to the Assembly, containing information relevant to legislative process (CSOs' years in existence, number of locales in Nicaragua, specific areas of practical expertise and implementation, type of research produced, current leadership, etc.).

**1.5 Deputy Orientation Program in 2001.** SUNY/IDG must reach basic agreements with its Assembly counterparts in order to carry out this initiative. A succinct plan describing the program's components and benefits, as well as the institutional support required to be successful, will be presented to the Assembly during the first half of Year 1. When a consensus as to orientation needs is reached, SUNY/IDG will research and organize several "trial" seminars on non-controversial issues (i.e., "Organization of the NNA" and "Administration and Logistics") and promote at least one informal retreat for existing members during

the second half of Year 1. At the conclusion of Year 1, a basic layout of orientation activities, including an orientation manual, will be ready for Deputies elected in 2001.

**1.6 International Conference on Legislative Strengthening; Study Tours for Deputies and Professional Staff.** Due to flooding in Mozambique, the USAID-sponsored 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Legislative Strengthening scheduled for February, 2000 was cancelled. Fortunately, our delegation did not travel and very little project funds were spent in preparation. SUNY/IDG will organize this event at a later time this year according to USAID's decision to locate same, and anticipates sending the same individuals to the conference. Plans for the small-scale study tours will be finalized over time, since they require coordination with NNA Deputies and staff in addition to partner projects/organizations in Guatemala and Mexico.

Within Year 1, four NNA Deputies and our COP will visit the Guatemalan Congress to visit the constituent service and legislative research areas which have been improved through USAID support. Also near the end of Year 1, the COP will accompany NNA library staff to observe modern library and archive services in the *Cámara de Diputados* in Mexico City.

The above events are prime opportunities to expose key players to successful modernization trends in the Latin American region. These experiences will reinforce SUNY/IDG's work areas in constituent work and legislative research, and participants will share insights with the NNA. SUNY/IDG will arrange for the participants to do a presentation to their colleagues upon return from their observational visits.

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

**2.1 Technical Assistance for Improved Public Hearings and Open Committee Meetings.** The strategy for this area is to assist the NNA to seek public participation in the legislative process in mutually acceptable ways. SUNY/IDG's role is, first, to help NNA leaders develop an improved "rules of the game" which will apply to various kinds of public meetings. Second, our COP and consultants will work to convince the leadership that it *needs* civil society input and that the NNA will have "ownership" of the consultative process. Third, SUNY/IDG will coordinate with established Nicaraguan NGOs capable of organizing public hearings and innovative committee meetings in order to create a neutral and professional bridge between Deputies, civil society groups and the general public. Our team will also hire experts to contribute to the design, planning and management of events, taking into account the style of Nicaraguan politics, press coverage and public participation. In this way, the Assembly will have an intelligent plan for incorporating the knowledge and perspectives of the citizenry with less sense of risk. Importantly, SUNY/IDG will seek the NNA's

commitment to making the results of such public events accessible to all parties afterward. The latter goal will require a system of transcription and publication, a mechanism that SUNY/IDG would coordinate and support with basic equipment and CSO participation.

Specific plans for this activity will emerge during the first 4 to 5 months of Year 1. In the second half of Year 1, at least three public hearings on important (but not highly polemical) national issues can be organized in Managua and/or in a department. Results will include serious participation by NNA Deputies, professional contributions by civil society groups, an improved image of the Assembly based on productive and transparent work, and results of these innovative meetings are available to all parties—making efforts more worthwhile and sustainable. Another result area will be in the working relationship between the Assembly and civil society groups: both sides will view each other as more professional, competent and legitimate, and will value the work products of public hearings and participatory committee meetings.

**2.2 Constituent Relations Unit (CRU).** As mentioned in the contract's Work Statement, the actual name of this unit may vary, but the essential function of supporting legislators' responsiveness to their constituents remains prime. During first half of Year 1, SUNY/IDG will recruit necessary staff and house this unit initially in its local project office. The CRU Coordinator and staff will receive training and orientation in procedures for channeling citizens' inquiries, and the CRU Office will be equipped to receive public input via telephone, mail, internet and in person. A detailed description of this unit will be presented in Month 2 to the NNA's Modernization Committee and Junta Directiva, and the Assembly will need to put its full institutional support behind the external CRU office in order for the latter to function. One important example of such support will be the re-tasking of three existing staff to serve as CRU caseworkers.

During the second half of Year 1, the CRU staff will begin to channel citizen's inquiries and requests and will provide other information to visitors or callers such as locations, dates and times of public hearings. With expert help, the CRU will also generate a draft Constituent Relations Manual to support its functions, and SUNY/IDG will assist the NNA in the design of a pilot departmental outreach office (through a series of exploratory meetings) if Deputy interest is high.

Year 1 results should include a busy CRU office, preferably located near the NNA, with statistical information that reflects a growing Deputy responsiveness to his or her constituency. The general public will gradually place more confidence in the Assembly as a legitimate institution subject to public access and oversight. While the media may take a critical look at this initiative, the NNA should assume ownership of this unit and individual Deputies should be encouraged to perform well, thereby setting a positive example. The overall intended result is to create a mechanism to channel citizen contacts, generate



committee or Deputy interest in responding or following through in each case and make the Nicaraguan public aware of this mechanism.

**2.3 NNA Outreach Activities.** SUNY/IDG will support civic education through collaboration with local NGOs, where SUNY/IDG's role will be to coordinate the excellent work that local groups have done in civic education with the outreach needs of the Assembly. *Hagamos Democracia* (HG), along with other CSOs<sup>13</sup>, can help design and implement a new generation of outreach activities for the NNA to maintain more contact with the citizenry. Mock legislative assemblies, civic presentations oriented toward the legislative process, a public service radio spot "This Week in the Assembly" with taped sessions reaching rural radio stations, support for developing televised shows on current issues in the Assembly, tours of the Assembly by Nicaraguan high school students, and developing a summary of each day's legislative session to the public and online are the proposed work areas. In the Assembly, SUNY/IDG has already begun to bring attention to this need and recommends that NNA Deputies take full advantage of the public contacts and personal involvement that this activity demands. During the first half of Year 1, SUNY/IDG will meet with HG, USAID, and the NNA to present a variety of possible outreach activities that bring citizens closer to understanding the national legislative process and everyone's role in it. During this period SUNY/IDG will actively encourage the NNA to participate in the design of same, such that the Assembly feels a sense of ownership and functionality of this process. It has been observed in other countries that newsletters to their electoral population is a preferred way to transmit Deputies' experiences in the Assembly, their own biographical data and information on upcoming votes.

During the second half of Year 1, Deputies will voluntarily participate in the events above and develop a greater sense of "their constituency," with outreach visits to schools, NGOs, grassroots centers and municipalities. During this period, SUNY/IDG will hire several local and international consultants to give seminars to Deputies and staff on stimulating and convincing themes relating to representation, democratic lawmaking and oversight responsibilities of legislatures in general. Our COP and consultants will create a compromise area in which mutually accepted activity plans can be acted on in the short term of this project. By the close of Year 1, there will be a variety of new growth areas in Deputy/constituent relations, many of which should become regular events such as tours of the NNA, weekly television and radio spots, daily legislative summaries, and Deputy appearances at mock legislative assemblies in high schools.

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<sup>13</sup> In this and other activities under Goal 2, SUNY/IDG will coordinate activities with a variety of civil society organizations, especially NDC (Centro para el Desarrollo Nicaraguense) which is the managing organization of a contemporaneous USAID program to strengthen human rights and civil society NGOs in Nicaragua.

**2.4 Development and Dissemination of Informational Materials about the NNA and its Functions.** The essential goal of this activity –given the existence of various types of civic education and civil society organizations that teach about government transparency and accountability—is to make sure that the NNA has a coordinated and collective way to effectively transmit its functions, procedures, outcomes and ethics to a wide-reaching public. Since printed materials in this area exist mainly through CSO publications, SUNY/IDG’s focus here will be on defining, with NNA and CSO input, what the content and format of new publications should be. Within the first six months of operation, SUNY/IDG will have numerous meetings with NNA administrators, the Modernization committee, and CSOs to confirm an accurate picture of institutional processes, past publications that were well or poorly received and illustrative cases that demonstrate the legislative process with special focus given to public participation.

During the last six months of Year 1, SUNY/IDG will continue to seek the participation of Deputies and CSOs in the new publication phase. Experienced CSOs such as *Hagamos Democracia* and *Fundemos* can assist in the final production and publication of a new line of NNA informational materials, such as a new version of “Conozcamos Nuestra Asamblea Nacional” edited for high school students, pamphlets describing NNA functions and procedures, and fact sheets on the Assembly, political parties and laws passed. By the end of Year 1, Deputies will have ample opportunity to participate in civic education and this activity is designed for them to have an active role.

**2.5 Improving Press Relations through Informal Meetings and Training.** As outlined in the Work Statement, this activity aims to improve NNA/media relations through training, events and mutual understanding of legislative and journalistic work. In cooperation with a CSO such as *Fundacion Violeta de Chamorro* (FVC), SUNY/IDG intends to use local capacity to build bridges between legislators and the media and organize background breakfasts, training seminars and town meetings. Additionally, SUNY/IDG will offer technical assistance to the NNA’s Dissemination and Press Division. During the first six months of Year 1 (slightly faster than time frame in this contract’s Work Statement), SUNY/IDG and FVC will organize the first in a series of background breakfasts and training seminars focusing on press relations. During this initial period SUNY/IDG will also use several consultants to develop a framework of issues to be addressed in these events, along with methods for addressing them.

The second half of Year 1 will continue with a series of background breakfasts, seminars, town meetings with NNA Deputies and members of the press, along with consultations with the Dissemination and Press Division. By the close of Year 1, at least four well-organized events will have been held. Given the high profile and energized nature of press relations, the management and periodic

review of these activities will be crucial. During Year 1 we expect to build confidence in this area among participant groups and to carry out several events that make genuine interest and confidence even stronger.

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

**3.1 Power Plants, Network Extensions and Public Access Workstations: Follow-on Components to the New Information System.** Continuing work on the NNA's infrastructure is proposed under this activity, and will bring significant benefits to legislative work. First, SUNY/IDG possesses the technical knowledge to plan and install a modest power plant to address the problem of frequent power outages. Next, the Assembly's new computer network needs to be expanded to reach certain areas, such as legislative committee spaces, offices of *Bancadas*, and new legislative service areas such as the LIP/CRU, legislative library and NNA training center. Finally, SUNY/IDG will install several public computer workstations in conjunction with the NNA's public participation initiatives, allowing dissemination of legislative information as well as feedback and inquiries/searches from workstation users. Discussions have occurred regarding placing some NNA-oriented workstations in Nicaraguan universities where users would be numerous and focused on national legislative issues.

SUNY/IDG will proceed with the design for the power plants and network extensions after coordination with the NNA Modernization Committee within the first six months of Year 1. Also during the first half of Year 1, the sites and design for the public workstations will be developed. Barring extenuating circumstances, SUNY/IDG will purchase necessary equipment during the second half of Year 1. The actual installation of cabling in the Assembly buildings may best be achieved at one time during the July or December recesses, for example. By the close of Year 1, all the design and planning aspects of these components will be complete, and physical installation is performed thereafter.

**3.2 NNA Deputies' Virtual (Laptop Computer) Office.** The objective of this activity is to bring the benefits of the new computer network and NNA databases to each Deputy through laptop computers and software designed to facilitate legislative work. Given the lack of offices for NNA Deputies, the laptop is viewed as a useful solution to a lack of (or insufficient) access to the new information systems for Deputies. During the first six months of the project, SUNY/IDG will identify a donor to cover the equipment and training needs of this activity. The donation will require developing a relationship with potential donors and presenting the advances and objectives of USAID's contract with SUNY/IDG. For the second half of Year 1, the donated laptops will be loaded with specialized software to accommodate the legislative and office needs of NNA Deputies and correspond to the NNA computer network and databases. Assuming a successful relationship with a laptop donor, by the end of Year 1 NNA Deputies will be equipped with appropriate equipment for these purposes.

**3.3 Design and Implementation of a NNA Training Center.** This initiative will provide much-needed training space and facilities to the institution as a whole – but will also enhance SUNY/IDG’s training activities once it is established. Preliminary discussions with the NNA Modernization Committee revealed the possibility of locating the center in a portion of the basement lobby of the *Banco de America* building. SUNY/IDG has explained to committee members that SUNY/IDG cannot perform any building renovations whatsoever. However, if the NNA can prepare an adequate and secure space there through modest renovation, then SUNY/IDG will be able to equip the space with modest furniture, computers/network points and other equipment that is needed for training purposes.

Assuming this location will be approved by the NNA authorities, then a final decision on the location and steps toward its renovation will be underway during the first six months of the program. After the NNA has provided an appropriately remodeled space, our team will equip the space as soon as possible. During the second half of Year 1, work to set up the center should be well under way. SUNY/IDG recommends that an understanding be reached with the NNA during the life of the ISCP Program that allows our project to have priority use of the center (or use during a certain schedule or by reservation) in order to complete all the ISCP training activities under all three main goals. While the Work Statement of our contract reflects that installation work will begin in Year 2, given the suitable location presently under discussion SUNY/IDG may be able to begin this work earlier—in the first half of Year 1.

**3.3 Modernization of the NNA’s Javier Aviles Legislative Library.** The overall objective of this activity is to transform the library into a more useful, modern facility that supports the legislative process. Over the two-year contract period, SUNY/IDG proposes to work on modernizing the library equipment (computerized and bar-code system), provide training to library staff, and offer other opportunities such as a focused study tour to Mexico City to observe the library and archive systems of the Mexican *Camara de Diputados* (lower house). During Year 1, SUNY/IDG will develop a strategic plan to modernize library functions, make equipment purchases, conduct a study tour to Mexico and fully collaborate with existing staff with regard to training goals and the importance of being linked to current legislative information and making frequent updates. At the close of Year 1, a collaborative plan will have been made, internal support will be strong, and implementation of the computerized system, bar-coding and staff training will begin.

**3.5 Digital Archive for the NNA.** This activity will bring a highly useful addition to the NNA’s computer network, since it will give Deputies, committees and other users nearly instant and complete access to key legislative documentation. During the first half of Year 1, SUNY/IDG will do a needs assessment in this area and draw up a preliminary design for the archive. During this period, our COP will coordinate with NNA counterparts to determine when and how existing original documentation will be converted or scanned in order to

be included in the archive, and will address methods for piecing together documents (an indicative problem), the need to have authorized NNA officials review the original NNA files as compared to the new NNA digital archive, and a training plan to familiarize all NNA Deputies and staff with its use. The second half of Year 1 will involve the purchase of the digital archive server and related equipment, and the loading of information onto the archive will proceed. SUNY/IDG views the processing of documents to file in the digital archive as an activity that it can begin and later transfer to the appropriate NNA staff, in addition to designing automatic links for new legislative information to be stored there. By the end of Year 1, the digital archive will be established and a portion of the original NNA archives will be loaded onto it.

Goal 1. Improved quality of the law and legislative functions through a program of legislative te					
<b>Program Activities</b>	1.1 Legislative Internship Program (LIP)	1.2 Database of Local/International Consultants	1.3 Intensive Training in Bill-Drafting and Budget Analysis	1.4 Civil Society Organization (CSO) Directory	1.5 Deputy Program
<b>Purpose</b>	Support neutral legislative research service and train young professionals	Promote utilization of experts in national legislation	Increase bill-drafting and budget analysis capabilities of NNA	Increase Deputy interest in and use of CSO resources	Strengthen of his/h
<b>Intermediate Results</b>	<p>Interns trained in research techniques and Deputies access more information.</p> <p>NNA has closer relationship with local universities.</p> <p>NNA has enhanced ability to analyze and generate effective legislation.</p>	<p><b>Database of experts made available to NNA committees, Deputies, political parties and CSOs.</b></p> <p>Area experts are consulted at various points in the legislative process.</p>	<p>Consultants provide “train the trainer” seminars to NNA Deputies and staff.</p> <p>Training in bill-drafting and budget analysis reaches a broad range of players in NNA.</p> <p>Non-partisan, resident expertise is developed.</p>	<p>Legislators have a clearer idea of CSOs’ structure and capabilities via-a-vis legislative debate.</p> <p>NNA committees and Deputies use directory to seek CSO input and contributions.</p>	<p>NNA Deputies enhance workshop training</p> <p>Deputies: responsible legislative quickly member</p> <p>New Deputies clear id informal encourage</p>
<b>Indicators</b>	<p>Number of legislative studies requested and prepared by LIP interns.</p> <p>Number of university counterparts consulted and local experts utilized.</p> <p>Number of LIP legislative studies referenced by NNA committees and Deputies</p>	<p>Number of experts listed in database and frequency of updates.</p> <p>Number of bills and laws developed with support of experts from database.</p>	<p>Number of training sessions held for NNA Deputies and staff.</p> <p>Number of resident experts developed and degree of NNA staff participation.</p> <p>Number and quality of in-house curricula developed.</p>	<p>Number of CSOs in directory.</p> <p>Depth of information on CSOs reflects their legislative capabilities.</p> <p>Number of CSOs from directory consulted or invited to meetings by NNA committees and Deputies.</p>	<p>Number satisfied</p> <p>Number workshop administ</p> <p>Number: satisfied retreats.</p> <p>Number training</p>
<b>Variables/ External factors</b>	<p>Impediments to objective and party-neutral research.</p> <p>Political influence on studies requested.</p> <p>Ability of decision-makers to embrace non-partisan legislative research concept.</p>	<p>Political will to consult experts in legislative debates.</p> <p>Evolution of identification of experts by party, ideology or area of specialization.</p>	<p>Tensions with other branches of GON over budget and lawmaking issues.</p> <p>Degree of motivation among NNA Deputies and staff.</p>	<p>CSO identification with ideology or political party.</p> <p>CSO capabilities.</p> <p>Deputies’ interest in the high quality of information and experience of CSOs</p>	<p>Deputies: embrace program</p> <p>Consensus orientati</p>

## Goal 2. Greater opportunity for public participation in legislative process

Program Activities	2.1. Improved public NNA hearings	2.2 Constituent Relations Unit (CRU)	2.3 NNA Outreach Activities	2.4 NNA Informational Materials	2
<b>Purpose</b>	Improve NNA management of hearings and public participation in legislative process	Strengthen Deputy responsiveness to his/her constituency	Increase Deputies' role in civic education and projection of NNA	Support better public understanding of the Assembly	I p l e w
<b>Intermediate Results</b>	<p>Half of the NNA's committees hold issue-focused public hearings aimed at gathering public input, in Managua or departments.</p> <p>Public hearings sponsored by the NNA are judged to be useful and informative by the participants and are newly recognized as an innovative mechanism to support lawmaking.</p> <p>Information on hearings is published and made available to the public.</p>	<p>CRU is established with NNA support and citizen inquiries are channeled to NNA Deputies and committees.</p> <p>Citizen requests are handled professionally and thoroughly, and responsiveness of NNA Deputies improves.</p> <p>Planning of a pilot departmental office to handle constituent relations on a local level and improve responsiveness to constituents.</p> <p>A Constituent Relations Manual with specific procedures and best practices is prepared.</p>	<p>Outreach activities such as civic presentations, mock legislative assemblies, summaries of daily legislative sessions and tours of the NNA increase citizens' knowledge of and interest in the work of their elected representatives.</p> <p>Radio spots and television broadcasts offer Deputies the opportunity to explain their work and reach more citizens.</p>	<p>Technical assistance is provided to the NNA in improved informational materials, including a children's book and brochures.</p> <p>Materials are distributed through outreach programs and by Deputies.</p>	M s b t j u r a  E p o u o l
<b>Indicators</b>	<p>Number of issue-focused public hearings held.</p> <p>Number of NNA committee meetings receiving support related to citizen participation.</p> <p>Number of CSOs participating (through attendance, testimony and commentary) in hearings.</p> <p>Change in citizen's perception of NNA responsiveness.</p> <p>Number of legislative bills improved by the public hearing process.</p> <p>Number of transcriptions of hearings made and distributed.</p> <p>Number of public hearings and committee meetings with citizen input summarized on NNA data network or web page</p>	<p>Allocation of space for CRU is made.</p> <p>Number of suggestions and complaints channeled through CRU (monthly tally).</p> <p>Change in perceived responsiveness of NNA to constituent needs (surveys)</p> <p>Pilot departmental office is planned and approved by NNA Junta Directiva.</p> <p>Numbers of Constituent Relations Manuals distributed and NNA and Deputies trained</p>	<p>Number of mock legislative assemblies held in Nicaraguan high schools.</p> <p>Number of civic education presentations made in schools and CSO locales.</p> <p>Number of radio spots with Deputies produced and broadcast around the country.</p> <p>Number of tours of NNA by visitors and school groups.</p> <p>Number of television spots with Deputies produced and broadcast around the country.</p>	<p>Numbers of <i>Conozcamos Nuestra Asamblea Legislativa</i> published and distributed to schools and CSOs.</p> <p>Number of brochures designed and published.</p> <p>Numbers of Deputies who distribute informational materials in their electoral departments or at NNA tours.</p>	N b n  N w r E  N a n a p  N a h a d

			Daily legislative summaries disseminated to media.		
<b>Variables/ External factors</b>	<p>Degree of political “buy-in.”</p> <p>Management of public events.</p> <p>Combination of positive political behavioral changes by <i>both</i> Deputies and CSO leaders.</p>	<p>Deputy willingness to spend time on constituency matters.</p> <p>NNA’s ability to solidify institutional and political support for responsiveness to citizenry.</p>	<p>Collaboration with NGOs and media groups.</p> <p>Deputy commitment to outreach efforts.</p>	Degree of Deputy participation in disseminating information.	<p>L</p> <p>le</p> <p>A</p> <p>c</p> <p>d</p>



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

<b>Program Activities</b>	3.1 Power Plants, Network Extensions, Public Access workstations	3.2 NNA Deputies' Virtual Office	3.3 NNA Training Center	3.4 Modernization of Library	3
<b>Purpose</b>	Continue strategic expansion of NNA information systems	Provide needed equipment and training to Deputies to perform work and access network	Support comprehensive solution to NNA training needs	Transform <i>Javier Aviles</i> Legislative Library to a modern, user-friendly system	P a n o
<b>Intermediate Results</b>	<p>Power plants are installed in legislative buildings to ensure uninterrupted use of the new information systems.</p> <p>Network extension accommodates needed service points in the NNA environment.</p> <p>Public access is promoted and enhanced through computer workstations.</p>	<p>A donor is identified in order to meet the equipment and standard software needs of the Virtual Office.</p> <p>SUNY/IDG implements a customized software package on each laptop computer oriented toward legislative work.</p> <p>Deputies use laptops in their daily work, gaining access to the new LMIS wherever they are and at any time.</p>	<p>NNA allocates appropriately renovated space for Training Center.</p> <p>SUNY/IDG acquires equipment and furniture to be used at the Training Center.</p> <p>Specific training needs are met in an efficient way, and the Center is made available to a broad spectrum of NNA users.</p>	<p>A strategic plan to modernize the NNA library is made, including modernization of equipment and training.</p> <p>Training activities, ranging from a study tour to locally held workshops and seminars, are offered to NNA library staff.</p> <p>SUNY/IDG assists in a major technological upgrade of the library system, and the new library is more useful to legislative researchers and more efficient.</p>	A i n g r c t i v i t
<b>Indicators</b>	<p>Productivity of NNA Deputy and staff (number of work-hours) enhanced through power plant installation (survey)</p> <p>Number of additional network extension points created and public workstations available</p> <p>Number of public access workstations installed and number/frequency of users</p>	<p>Donor identified for equipment needs of Virtual office</p> <p>Number of Deputies equipped with laptop computers to aid in legislative work</p> <p>Number and frequency of Deputies accessing LMIS through laptops</p>	<p>NNA space allocated and renovated as necessary.</p> <p>Number of equipment items purchased and installed.</p> <p>Number and frequency of training sessions held at Center</p> <p>Spectrum of NNA offices and staff using the Center (surveys)</p>	<p>Number of users of computerized library system</p> <p>Number of participants in study tour to Mexican Congressional Library</p> <p>Number of workshops/seminars held for library staff on new library technology</p> <p>Number of users and satisfaction with new system (surveys)</p> <p>Quality of legislative research and access to collections enhanced (surveys)</p>	N d  N u c  N a u
<b>Variables/ External Factors</b>	Strategic partnerships with universities, CSOs and private sector in bringing large increase in effective promotion of legislative careers.	<p>Donor interest in supporting <i>Virtual Office</i>.</p> <p>Commitment to train every Deputy in the information systems of the Assembly.</p>	<p>Decision to allocate scarce space in NNA.</p> <p>Multi-party support of the initiative.</p>	Ability of existing library staff to support/participate in modernization.	A i d  N a ( l



**Appendix 3: Financial Report on Expenses per Activity  
for Fiscal Quarter 2 of 2000 (February and March, 2000)**

**Appendix 4: Report from SUNY/IDG's Information  
Technology consultant, Rodolfo Calderón C.**

## **MEMORANDUM**

A : Guillermo García Alarcón  
Gerente del Proyecto

DE : Rodolfo Calderón Cornejo  
Consultor en Tecnología

FECHA : 23/5/2000

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Sirva la presente para entregarle el informe trimestral correspondiente a los meses de febrero, marzo y abril del año 2,000.

Durante este primer periodo nuestro trabajo se ha basado en la definición de los planes de trabajo así como en actividades de análisis y diagnóstico de la situación actual en especial de la oficina de biblioteca, para lo cual hemos realizado varias reuniones de trabajo con el personal de la biblioteca de la Asamblea Nacional así como de otras bibliotecas, con la finalidad obtener información de otras experiencias.

Por otro lado se identificó las necesidades de equipamiento de cómputo a utilizarse en este proyecto, para la oficina y para la asamblea, preparándose los términos de referencia para realizar el concurso.

Así mismo, se realizó el proceso para la incorporación de dos programadores juniors que servirán de apoyo para realizar las tareas de tecnología del proyecto. Su incorporación se prevé para la tercera semana del mes de mayo.

Sin otro particular al cual referirme, me reitero de usted

Atentamente,

Rodolfo Calderón Cornejo  
Consultor en Tecnología de la Información  
**INFORME TRIMESTRAL**

**Febrero – Marzo - Abril del 2,000**

El presente informe corresponde al trabajo del consultor en Tecnología de la Información para

# el desarrollo del Proyecto de Fortalecimiento Institucional de la Asamblea Legislativa de Nicaragua.

## Proyecto de Automatización de Biblioteca

### Diagnóstico

Se iniciaron las conversaciones con la Dirección de Biblioteca a través de la Lic. Fanny Ocampo responsable de Procesos Técnicos, debido a que el Director, Sr. José Luis Bendaña, no ha sido posible coordinar con él hasta la fecha. El Sr. Bendaña se desempeña además de Director de la Biblioteca como asesor de la Presidencia de la Asamblea Nacional.

Las primeras reuniones realizadas se orientaron a realizar un levantamiento de información con miras a elaborar el diagnóstico inicial de la Biblioteca. El documento de diagnóstico contempla los siguientes puntos:

- Objetivo de la Biblioteca
- Funciones
- Servicios que Ofrece
- Sistema de codificación
- Inventario
- Estadísticas de los servicios prestados en el último año
- Organización
- Equipamiento de cómputo
- Experiencias en proceso de modernización
- Fortalezas y Debilidades
- Conclusiones y Recomendaciones

Como conclusiones obtenidas de este diagnóstico podemos rescatar lo siguiente:

1. Los recursos asignados a La Biblioteca Legislativa “Javier Avilés” son escasos, lo que no permite la renovación y actualización de material bibliográfico.
2. Existen Diputados que desconocen la existencia de la Biblioteca Legislativa muchas veces por la falta de difusión de ella misma.
3. El 100% del material bibliográfico ha sido procesado técnicamente, es decir ha sido catalogado y se encuentra disponible en fichas.
4. Los convenios de intercambio y donación de material bibliográfico con otras universidades del país e instituciones de otros países no se llevan a cabo, es decir, a pesar que están firmados no se ha realizado el seguimiento adecuado.
5. La Biblioteca Legislativa no cuenta con el apoyo y ni se le ha dado la importancia adecuada dentro del proceso de formación de la ley, como fuente de información y conocimiento para la elaboración de las leyes.

6. El personal de la Biblioteca está consciente de la necesidad de realizar un cambio en su forma de trabajo, de una manera manual a una forma automática.
7. Es necesario orientar los servicios de la biblioteca priorizando a los clientes internos: Diputados, Asesores, Funcionarios y empleados de la Asamblea.
8. Es necesario cambiar el rol pasivo de la biblioteca a un rol proactivo, llegando al usuario con alertas bibliográficas e información que sea útil.
9. Es necesario nombrar un Director a dedicación exclusiva de la Biblioteca.

### Experiencias en Nicaragua

Con el objetivo de obtener información de experiencias realizadas en otras bibliotecas de Nicaragua, se coordinó la visita a las bibliotecas de: Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), Corte Suprema de Justicia, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua / León (UNAN/León).

#### *Biblioteca de la Universidad Centroamericana (UCA)*

Es una de las bibliotecas más completas de Nicaragua, cuenta con una colección de aproximadamente 70,000 volúmenes y se encuentra totalmente automatizada.

El software utilizado para la administración de la biblioteca es el SIABUC - Siglo XXI, proporcionado por la Universidad de Colima – México.

#### *Biblioteca de la Corte Suprema de Justicia*

Es una biblioteca especializada en temas jurídicos y cuenta con una colección de aproximadamente 25,000 volúmenes.

El software utilizado para la administración de la biblioteca es el MICRO ISIS, software distribuido por la UNESCO.

#### *Biblioteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua /León*

Cuenta con una colección de aproximadamente 100,000 volúmenes y se encuentra totalmente automatizada.

El software utilizado para la administración de la biblioteca es el SIABUC - Siglo XXI, proporcionado por la Universidad de Colima – México.

### Software

De acuerdo a las reuniones realizadas con los directores de las bibliotecas mencionadas anteriormente se obtuvo información referente a dos programas utilizados para la administración de bibliotecas: SIABUC y el Micro Isis, cuyas características se muestran en el cuadro siguiente:

<b>MICRO ISIS</b>	<b>SIABUC</b>
Es un programa que permite desarrollar módulos sobre el sistema inicial.	Es un programa enlatado, es decir, no se puede realizar desarrollos adicionales.
Contempla los módulos de análisis y consulta	Contempla los módulos de: adquisiciones, análisis, consultas, prestamos, consultas en internet.
Es necesario incorporar una persona con estudios informáticos al área de biblioteca que apoyo en forma continua en las labores diarias y desarrolle los modulo adicionales	Los sistemas están diseñados para ser utilizados por personas con conocimientos elementales informáticos.

### Contactos con SIABUC

Con el objeto de obtener mayor información sobre el sistema SIABUC, nos comunicamos vía fax con la Biblioteca de la Universidad de Colima de México en dos ocasiones, no habiendo recibido respuesta hasta el momento.

De acuerdo a coordinaciones realizadas con la Directora de la Biblioteca de la Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), aprovechando la venida de un profesor de la Universidad de Colima a Nicaragua, se obtuvo una reunión para conversar sobre las ventajas de este sistema. En esta reunión se nos explicó el procedimiento para la adquisición del producto, así como la contratación de la capacitación.

## **Proyecto de Modernización del Archivo**

### Levantamiento de información

En varias ocasiones se ha tenido reuniones de trabajo con la Directora del Archivo, Lic. Liesel Mora y el encargado informático de esta oficina, Sr. Exequiel Soto, para obtener información acerca de los documentos existentes en el Archivo, así como el estado en que se encuentran.

Hasta el momento se han identificado los siguientes documentos disponibles para digitalizar:

Documentos	Cantidad	Porcentaje
<b>Cuadros Estadísticos</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>0.32%</b>
<b>Personalidades Jurídicas</b>	<b>37,125</b>	<b>56.23%</b>
<b>Otros Tipos de Decretos</b>	<b>2,835</b>	<b>4.29%</b>
<b>Leyes</b>	<b>2,732</b>	<b>4.13%</b>
<b>Agendas</b>	<b>15,724</b>	<b>23.81%</b>



<b>Diarios de Debates</b>	<b>7,383</b>	<b>11.18%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>66,015</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Adicionalmente, existen varios documentos que suman 750,000 hojas, pero no se encuentran clasificados.

#### Reunión con la empresa Servicios de Entrada de Datos

De acuerdo a experiencias anteriores, en proyectos de digitalización, se obtuvo contacto con la empresa Sistema de Entradas de Datos (SED), empresa Costarricense especialista en estos proyectos.

En la reunión de trabajo con esta empresa, se quedó en una segunda reunión, más técnica, para finales del mes de mayo, con el objetivo de dimensionar el proyecto.

#### Reunión con la empresa GBM (representante de IBM en Nicaragua)

Tuvimos la visita de funcionarios de Lotus Notes, cuyo representante en Nicaragua es GBM. En estas reuniones nos mostraron su producto "Documents Doc", el cual puede ser útil para la administración de documentos digitalizados. Quedó pendiente la instalación de este producto por un periodo de prueba.

## Concursos

En el mes de abril, se elaboraron los términos de referencia para la adquisición de equipamiento que se utilizará en el proyecto y también en la Asamblea Nacional.

Se realizaron 2 concursos:

- Concurso PFIANN2 Nro. 01/2000: Adquisición de Equipos de Cómputo del Proyecto y Ampliación de la Red de Datos:

<b>Equipos</b>	<b>Cantidad</b>
Computadoras con Tarjeta Fax módem	6
Computadoras sin Tarjeta Fax módem	13
Impresoras Láser	6
Reguladores de Voltaje	6
Proyector Multimedia	1
Pantalla de Proyección	1
Cámara Digital	1
Tarjetas de Red para PC	2
Tarjetas de Red para Notebook	1
Tarjetas de Red para Impresora Láser	1
Puntos de Datos y Eléctrico	19
Hubs	2

- Concurso PFIANN2 Nro. 02/2000: Adquisición de Equipos para Sala de Capacitación

<b>Equipos</b>	<b>Cantidad</b>
Televisor a color	1
VHS	1
Rack para televisor y VHS	1
Proyector Multimedia	1
Pantalla de proyección	1
Equipo de Sonido Profesional	1
Cámara de Vídeo	1
Cámara Digital	1
Instalaciones Eléctricas	

Ambas convocatorias se realizaron el 24 de abril. El concurso se realizó mediante invitación directa a las empresas más representativas de Managua:

- Concurso PFIANN2 Nro. 01/2000: Adquisición de Equipos de Cómputo del Proyecto y Ampliación de la Red de Datos:
  - Xerox de Nicaragua
  - Merinco
  - J. Icaza y Asociados
  - GBM
  - Corporación Roberto Terán
  - CONICO
- Concurso PFIANN2 Nro. 02/2000: Adquisición de Equipos para Sala de Capacitación:
  - Galería Internacional
  - CECA
  - Corporación Roberto Terán
  - Radio Shack
  - Tienda Polar
  - Tienda Mil
  - Casa de los Parlantes y otros
  - COPASA
  - Telerepuestos
  - La hogareña
  - Merinco

Se espera que a mediados del mes de marzo se dé la buena pro de ambos concursos.

# Contratación de Programadores Juniors

De acuerdo a lo previsto en el presupuesto aprobado, se inició el proceso de selección y contratación de dos programadores junior quienes brindarán apoyo al Consultor de Tecnología en el desarrollo de los proyectos definidos en el plan de trabajo.

Dentro del proceso de selección, se cursó una carta a los decanos de las facultades de ingeniería de sistemas de tres universidades: Universidad Católica, Universidad de Ingeniería y la Universidad Americana, solicitándoles estudiantes del último año con los siguientes requisitos:

- **Conocimientos de herramientas Visuales**
- **Conocimientos de HTML y programación en Internet**
- **Conocimiento básico de Windows NT**
- **Iniciativa propia, capacidad para auto educación, trabajo por objetivos.**
- **Buen conocimiento de inglés técnico.**
- **Facilidad para trabajar en equipos multidisciplinarios.**

Como resultado de esta convocatoria se recibieron los siguientes currículums:

<b>Nombre</b>	<b>Universidad</b>
Walter José García	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua
María José Monterrey P.	Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería
Hernán Solórzano Prado	Universidad Católica
Miriam Soraya Arias Ruiz	Universidad Católica
Eddy Francisco Pérez	Universidad Católica
César Alejandro Díaz Briceño	Universidad Católica
Miriam Vigil	Universidad Católica

Se citó a cada uno de los estudiantes a una entrevista para conocer su experiencia y conocimientos, se les explicó los alcances del proyecto y todos mostraron interés en participar.

A pesar que existe retraso en la incorporación de este personal, se espera que inicien sus labores para la segunda quincena del mes de mayo.

**Appendix 5: Program from 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference  
on Legislative Strengthening, June, 2000**

2<sup>ND</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING

**June 5 – 8, 2000**

**Wintergreen Resort, Virginia USA**

**Sponsored by USAID's Center for Democracy and Governance**

**Introduction:** The number of legislative assistance projects and the number of individuals and organizations involved in such projects has grown considerably since USAID's 1996 International Conference on Legislative Strengthening held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The purpose of the upcoming conference is to examine key issues related to legislative strengthening and to share best practices. The central theme of conference plenary and small group discussion sessions will be "Legislatures and Representation."

**Overall Theme: Legislatures and Representation:** Representation is *the* fundamental role of legislatures in democratic regimes. A primary focus of legislative strengthening programs, therefore, is to seek ways to improve a legislature's representation functions, and to help legislators (and citizens) understand how representation shapes and influences other legislative functions (lawmaking and oversight), duties, and responsibilities. The conference will explore how various political, structural, and institutional factors affect representation. Specific issues will include how varieties of regime types, electoral systems, legislative procedures, and organization influence representation, and how civil societies and legislatures interact in varying systems. Discussion sessions will seek to highlight important factors among these variables that affect programming decisions. In addition, conference sessions will examine the successes and constraints of legislative strengthening activities, especially in light of their impact on representation. Using examples from recent international projects, speakers and participants will explore how to design appropriate responses to legislative needs, and where, when, and why assistance has (or has not) succeeded in making the legislature a more effective, democratic institution.

Conference attendees will discuss various topics including methods for assessing political will and for conducting legislative assessments; the peculiarities of implementing institution-building programs in a political environment; and working with political systems and legislatures under special conditions, such as post-conflict environments, decentralizing systems, and countries with large proportions of underrepresented groups.

General sessions and presentations will highlight recent examples of legislative strengthening projects and approaches that shed light on understanding how best to enhance a deliberative body's ability to represent voters' interests. In discussion groups, participants will explore how these approaches have succeeded in helping strengthen legislatures and identify effective methods for helping legislatures to develop the research, outreach, and oversight tools that truly support the representative function.

## MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2000

**12:30 PM - Registration:**  
**6:00 PM Location:** Skyline Room Foyer

**4:00 PM Briefing session for moderators and note takers**  
Location:

**6:00 PM Opening Session**  
**Location:** Skyline Room

**Welcome:** **Mr. Jim E. Vermillion**, Deputy Director, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID

**The Role of Legislatures in Democratizing Countries and the Challenges They Face in Fulfilling that Role.**

**Speaker:** **Mr. Anders Johnsson**, Secretary General of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU). *Established in 1889, the IPU is the world organization of parliaments of sovereign states. There are currently 138 Members and five Associate Members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.*

**6:45 PM Welcome Reception**  
**Location:** Skyline Room

**Evening free, dinner at your leisure**

## TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2000

**Breakfast:** At your leisure. The Copper Mine Restaurant opens at 7:00 AM.

- 9:00 AM**      **Welcome by Center for Democracy and Governance (USAID) and explanation of conference goals, questions, and issues.** (General Session)  
**Location:** Skyline Room  
**Speaker:** **Mr. Jim E. Vermillion**, Deputy Director, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID
- 9:15 AM-10:30 AM**      **Representation as the Fundamental Role for Democratic Legislatures**  
(General Session)  
This session focuses on the meaning and importance of representation in legislatures. What is the representative function, and how does it relate to development in general? Is representation an end or a means to end for legislative development? What are the various definitions of representation? If representation is the defining characteristic of democratic legislatures, how does it relate to other functions, namely lawmaking and oversight? How do legislatures and civil society interact in different systems?
- Location:** Skyline Room  
**Moderator:** **Mr. Jim E. Vermillion**, Deputy Director, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID  
**Speaker:** **Dr. Michael Mezey**, Professor of Political Science, DePaul University.
- Questions and Discussion**
- 10:30 AM**      **Coffee Break**
- 11:00 AM-1:00 PM**      **How do Political and Institutional Factors Affect Representation?**  
(General Session)  
How do different political and institutional factors promote (or limit) representation? How do different regime types, electoral, party systems and structures affect the representative function of legislatures? The session will compare representation activities in the context of different regimes, such as in a post-socialist nation; in an African nation in transition; in party-list or mixed electoral system; and in countries with many active citizen and NGO groups that influence party platforms.
- Location:** Skyline Room  
**Moderator:** **Mr. Jim E. Vermillion**, Deputy Director, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID  
**Speakers:** **Dr. Scott Morgenstern**, Duke University.  
**Dr. Shaheen Mozaffar**, USAID Center for Democracy and Governance
- Questions and Discussion**
- 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM**      **Lunch\* History and Development of the Virginia State Legislature**  
**Location:** Commonwealth Ballroom  
**Speaker:** **Hon. Hunter B. Andrews.** *During Mr. Hunter's 22 years in the Virginia State Legislature, he served as majority leader for 15 years, and chaired the Senate committees on Finance, Education and Health, Privilege and Elections, and Rules.*

(\*Interpreters will be available at tables labeled Spanish, French, or Portuguese).

**3:00 PM -  
5:00 PM**

**Conducting Legislative Assessments in Different Political Contexts**

(Concurrent Discussion Group)

A legislative assessment is a tool for ascertaining the strengths and weaknesses of a legislature and for helping identify reforms and practices that can enhance its democratic performance. Presenters will define key factors to be considered in determining the needs of legislatures, and will explore how structural factors (such as regime type or electoral system) can favor or negate certain activities. Participants will further explore key features of assessments and just what they can and cannot accomplish for legislators and those supporting their efforts to strengthen their institution.

**Location:** Pryor's Porch Room

**Moderator:** **Mr. Stephen M. Brager**, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID

**Panelists:** **Ms. Susan M. Benda**, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

**Mr. John K. Johnson**, International Development Group, SUNY

**Dr. William Robinson**, Congressional Research Service

**Questions and discussion**

**3:00 PM -  
5:00 PM**

**Political Will and Support for Legislative Strengthening**

(Concurrent Discussion Group)

Why do some legislatures make efforts to strengthen themselves as institutions, and others do not? What forces—within the legislature or within civil society—encourage legislative reform? Can such forces be encouraged, and under what conditions? Are there signs that indicate that assistance should not be provided (at least with the objective of strengthening the legislature)? How can legislators build coalitions for reform? In discussions, participants will consider how and why legislatures and societies support legislative reform, and what might be done to encourage these efforts.

**Location:** Skyline Room

**Moderator:** **Ms. Edith Houston**, USAID West Bank-Gaza

**Panelists:** **Hon. Francisco Paoli Bolio**, Speaker, Mexican House of Deputies

**Hon. Frederick Shumba Hapunda**, Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House, Zambia

**Mr. Chris George**, Chief of Party, ARD legislative strengthening project, West Bank-Gaza

**Questions and discussion**

**Evening free, dinner at your leisure**

**7:00 PM**

**Monticello bus tour pickup**

**8:00 PM**

**Monticello tour begins**



## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2000

**Breakfast:** At your leisure. The Copper Mine Restaurant opens at 7:00 AM.

**8:30 AM-  
10:30 AM**

### **Building Legislative Capabilities in Mozambique**

(Concurrent Discussion Group)

The National Assembly of Mozambique has moved toward becoming an equal partner with the executive in amending and enacting legislation, and it has developed and followed an ambitious modernization strategy. The Assembly has developed new infrastructure, research and drafting services, and public information and outreach mechanisms. This session will explore how and why specific capabilities were developed, what efforts have been most successful and what, if anything, could have been improved.

**Location:** Skyline Room

**Moderator:** **Mr. Miguel de Brito**, USAID/Mozambique

**Panelists:** **Hon. Veronica Nataniel Macamo**, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Assembly of Mozambique

Hon. Leopoldo Ernesto, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Assembly

Hon. Vincente Zacarias Ululu, Member of Permanent Committee, the Modernization Committee and former 2<sup>nd</sup> VP of the Assembly

Hon. Abdul Carimo, former 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Assembly

David Zafanias Sibambo, Sec. General, Assembly

Questions and discussion

8:30 AM- Developing Research and Bill-drafting Capabilities that Support the  
10:30 AM Representation Function

(Concurrent Discussion Group)

The session will examine how legislatures in different countries research issues and draft bills. Presentations will explore how research and drafting services can support both legislative and representative functions, how such services can support both opposition and majority parties, and when services should be developed in a partisan or non-partisan basis. Techniques for building citizen and expert consultation into the research and bill-drafting process will be discussed.

**Location:** Pryor's Porch Room

**Moderator:** TBA

**Panelists:** **Drs. Robert and Ann Seidman**, Boston University

**Mr. Marc Cassidy**, Chief of Party, SUNY, Uganda

**Mr. Reginald Todd**, Chief of Party, University of Texas, Guatemala

Questions and discussion

**10:30 AM-  
11:00 AM**

### **Coffee break**

11:00 AM- Legislative Projects in (Conflict and) Post-Conflict Societies

1:00 PM (Concurrent Discussion Group)

Legislatures often act as fora for dialogue and conflict resolution. Conflicts can, however, polarize and even paralyze a legislature's work. What are the challenges of implementing legislative support projects in societies emerging from recent (or on-going) conflict? What are the rewards? Discussions on different countries will be offered in breakout groups.

Location: **Pryor's Porch Room**

Moderator: Dr. Tom Wolf, USAID/Kenya

Panelists: Mr. Mauricio Herrera, **USAID/El Salvador**  
Mr. Yinka Oyinlola, **USAID/Angola**  
Mr. Keith Schulz, **former Legal Advisor, West Bank-Gaza and Cambodia**

Questions and discussion

**11:00 AM-  
1:00 PM**

### **Committees and Representation**

(Concurrent Discussion Group)

Session presentations will explore how committee structures and procedures affect representation. Discussion will explore practical questions such as: What can committees do to better involve citizens in deliberations? What actions can citizens and interest groups take to affect committee decisions? What rules or structures tend to inhibit or promote citizen input? Beyond formal mechanisms, what informal processes encourage public input by citizen groups?

**Location:** Skyline Room

**Moderator:** **Ms. Ketty Makharashvili**, USAID/Georgia

**Panelists:** **Mr. Basem Masri**, consultant to Palestinian Legislative Council  
**Hon. Alfonso Ferrufino**, former 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of Bolivia House of Deputies, current Director of the Fundación de Apoyo al Parlamento y a la Participación Ciudadana (FUNDAPPAC)  
**Christine Owre**, Chief of Party, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Malawi

Questions and discussion

**11: 00 AM-  
1:00 PM**

### **Implementing Legislation: Lessons From USAID's Implementing Policy Change Project**

(Concurrent Discussion Group)

USAID's Implementing Policy Change (IPC) project has, over the last nine years, successfully assisted host countries in their efforts to implement policy reform. During this time, IPC has developed a methodology that makes the process of policy development and implementation more participatory, accountable, and transparent, and ensures a sense of ownership for host country stakeholders over the reform agenda, creating incentives to see the policy reform implemented. As a policy implementation methodology, IPC has many lessons that are useful to legislators who wish to influence reform and see it implemented.

**Location:** Rockfish Room (No interpreters)

**Moderator:** **Pat Isman-Fn'Piere**, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID

**Panelists:** **Derick W. Brinkerhoff**, Abt Associates Inc.

**Pat Isman-Fn'Piere**, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID

Questions and discussion

**1:00 PM-  
3:00 PM**

**Lunch:** At your leisure

**3:00 PM-  
5:00 PM**

### **Developing Budget Making and Oversight Capabilities**

(Concurrent Session)

This session will consider different legislative roles in the budget-making process and factors that shape these roles. In addition, the session will probe related questions such as: What is the relationship between the power over the purse and oversight? What is the distinction between programmatic oversight, fiscal oversight, and ethics control? How does improved fiscal control impact representation? What is the role of the opposition? How can civil society assist in providing oversight?

**Location:** Pryor's Porch Room  
**Moderator:** TBA  
**Panelists:** **Mr. Frank Mauro**, Director, New York Fiscal Policy Institute  
**Hon. Dan Ogalo** and **Hon. Salaamu Musumba**, members of Parliamentary Commission, Uganda  
**Dr. George Guess**, Development Alternatives International

#### Questions and discussion

**3:00 PM-  
5:00 PM**      **Legislatures' Roles in Defense and National Security Issues**  
(Concurrent Discussion Group)

The issue of civil-military relations and civilian control over the development of national security and defense policy is central to democratic development, and the legislature can play a key role. However, while the relationship between civilian control over the military and democracy is fairly straightforward, the relationship between security sector reform and overall national development is less obvious. How can legislatures contribute to greater balance between national development and national security? What tools are available to defense committees, and legislatures as a whole, for them to exercise oversight of the military? How can the legislature promote greater national dialogue about national priorities and defense requirements?

**Location:** Rockfish Room (no interpreters)  
**Moderator:** **Ms. Keri Eiesenbeis**, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID  
**Panelists:** **Dr. Mark Kramer**, Harvard University  
**Dr. Pablo Martinez**, Chief of Staff, Argentine Senate Defense Committee  
**Hon. Guma Gumisiriza**, Parliamentary Commission, Uganda

#### Questions and discussion

**3:00 PM-  
5:00 PM**      **The Roles of Parties in Legislatures**  
(Concurrent Discussion Group)

This session will discuss the various roles that parties play within the legislature and how these roles vary depending on different factors, such as the type of constitutional structure, the electoral system, party structures, and the overall party system. How can parties organize themselves better within the legislature to pursue the needs and interests of their constituents? How do the various factors that affect party roles influence the ways that parties aggregate voters' views and translate them into law? What is the role of parties in the performance of the legislature's oversight function?

**Location:** Skyline Room  
**Moderator:** **Mr. Yinka Oyinlola**, USAID/Angola  
**Panelists:** **Dr. Ronald Shaiko**, American University  
**Hon. Frederick Shumba Hapunda**, Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House, Zambia  
**Dr. John Hemery**, Centre for Political and Diplomatic Studies, UK

**Questions and discussion**

**Evening free, dinner at your leisure**

# THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2000

**Breakfast:** At your leisure. The Copper Mine Restaurant opens at 7:00 AM.

**8:30 AM-  
10:00 AM**

**Improving Access to Decision-Making**  
(General Session)

What are the political and institutional constraints to access by underrepresented groups? Participants will explore how such groups are represented effectively, and whether one need be from an underrepresented group to represent it. Other topics include: What procedural and institutional mechanisms have been used to increase access in various countries and why were they selected? Have these systems been effective and have they enhanced representation? Different country examples may be used to discuss specific groups such as women, youth, salaried workers, handicapped, different religious groups, traditional authorities, regions, and languages.

**Location:** Skyline Room  
**Moderator:** **Mr. Jene Thomas**, USAID/Mexico  
**Panelists:** **Dr. William Culver**, State University of New York at Plattsburgh & **Hon. Alfonso Ferrufino**, Director of the Fundación de Apoyo al Parlamento y a la Participación Ciudadana (FUNDAPPAC), Bolivia  
**Hon. Dan Ogalo**, Member of the Parliamentary Commission, Uganda  
**Dr. Esim Simel**, International Center for Research on Women, Washington, D.C.

**Questions and discussion**

**10:00 AM** **Coffee Break**

10:30 AM- Technology and Representation

**12:00 PM** (Concurrent Discussion Group)

This session will present ways that technology has been used to improve representation and will explore questions such as the following: How can technology be used to improve representation? Have efforts to date been effective and why? Has the use of technology actually enabled citizens to affect policy change? Or does it favor an elite or certain groups? How can legislatures use the Internet to their best advantage?

**Location:** Pryor's Porch Room  
**Moderator:** TBA  
**Panelists:** **Mr. Guillermo Garcia**, Chief of Party, SUNY Nicaragua  
**Dr. William Robinson**, Congressional Research Service

**Questions and discussion**

10:30 AM-  
12:00 PM

What Roles can NGOs Play in Representing Citizen Interests?  
(Concurrent Discussion Group)

Traditionally NGOs have played advocacy or services roles, but they are increasingly providing assistance to legislatures. The session will present the comparative different forms that such assistance is taking and discussion will examine advantages and disadvantages of NGOs playing a more active role in reinforcing legislatures.

Location: **Skyline Room**  
Moderator: Mr. Michael Eddy, **USAID/Nicaragua**  
Panelists: Ms. Sheila Villaluz, **Executive Director, Center for Legislative Development, Philippines**  
Hon. María Lourdes Bolaños, **Legislative Modernization Committee, National Assembly of Nicaragua**  
Ms. Kate Head, **Political consultant, Washington**

Questions and discussion

10:30 AM-  
12:00 PM Legislatures and Decentralization  
(Concurrent Discussion Group)

The session will focus on how legislatures can relate to newly decentralized localities. How are local councils different from or similar to national level legislatures? How do national and sub-national legislatures relate to and interact with one another? Presenters will provide examples of types of assistance that have been provided to both national legislatures and sub-national legislative councils dealing with decentralization.

**Location:** Rockfish Room (no interpreters)  
**Moderator:** **Mr. Gary Bland**, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID  
**Panelists:** **Dr. Hal Lippman**, Center for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID  
**Oleksandr Pishun**, USAID/Ukraine and **Dr. Ellie Valentine**, Chief of Party, Indiana University  
**Karl Kurtz**, National Conference of State Legislatures

Questions and discussion

**12:00 PM-  
2:00 PM** **Lunch:** At your leisure

**2:00 PM-  
4:00 PM** **Institutional Development in a Political Environment**  
(Concurrent Discussion Group)

Legislative strengthening takes place in a complex and constantly changing environment in which individual legislators, political parties, government ministries, opposition groups, and interest groups interact and struggle for advantage. How do these factors affect legislative strengthening activities? How can program gains be sustained for the long-term? What can be learned from program successes and difficulties?

**Location:** Skyline Room (no interpreters)  
**Moderator:** **Ms. Jennifer Windsor**, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID  
**Panelists:** **Ms. Edith Houston**, USAID/West Bank-Gaza  
**Mr. Robert Balkin**, Chief of Party, SUNY/Mexico  
**Mr. Miguel de Brito**, USAID/Mozambique

2:00 PM-  
4:00 PM Legislative Strengthening from the Inside: Legislators' Perspective on Issues  
Affecting Democratic Institutional Development  
(Concurrent Discussion Group)

This session is designed specifically for legislators, so they have the opportunity to discuss issues they encounter in their efforts to modernize and develop their institutions to enhance democracy within their countries. Specific issues to be addressed will depend on those attending legislators raise themselves. The following are examples of questions that might be raised: How can reformers encourage their colleagues to think about their *institutions*, and not just about their own and their parties' advancement? What factors make that easier to do? How can legislators build and maintain support for legislative

strengthening? What strategies are available to deal with the executive when it does not support legislative strengthening activities? How can legislatures best manage donor assistance?

**Location:** Pryor's Porch Room

**Moderator:** **Hon. Alfonso Ferrufino**, former 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Bolivia House of Deputies

**4:00 PM-  
5:00 PM**

**Review of Key Themes, Continuing Debates, Useful Lessons and Next Steps**

This conference is an opportunity to glean insights from a core of professionals and practitioners in this field of legislative strengthening in democratizing countries. Which ideas and practices identified in the presentations and dialogue affect legislative development in democratizing countries and will help guide legislatures in their efforts to strengthen their institutions and processes? Where was there consensus? Which questions and issues are still not well understood or remain unresolved? Given limited resources, which of the unresolved questions should receive greater consideration and attention?

**Location:** Skyline Room

**Speaker:** Jennifer Windsor, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID

**5:00 PM**

**Conference Adjourns**