



Nicaragua: Fight Malnutrition & Inspire Education

PROJECT TITLE	Nicaragua: Fight Malnutrition & Inspire Education
Location	Community of San Andres, Municipality of Ciudad Sandino, Department of Managua, Nicaragua
Category	Nutrition
Beneficiaries	96 children
Duration	10 months
Requested Funding	\$10,000
Project's Goal	Improve food security and nutrition of 96 children from the school reinforcement program in the Community of San Andres, Municipality of Ciudad Sandino.

1) PRESENTATION OF THE ORGANIZATION

Since 1992, American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF) has helped mitigate the effects of poverty in the lives of the most vulnerable people in Nicaragua, prioritizing the sectors of education, health, nutrition, housing, agriculture, water and sanitation. In doing so, ANF has become one of Nicaragua's leading relief and development organizations.

ANF's vision focuses on promoting greater opportunity, self-sufficiency, and dignity to the poorest sectors of Nicaragua. The organization works towards sustainable development through the comprehensive strengthening of local organizations that contribute to the progress of their communities, regardless of race, sex, creed, or political orientation. It collaborates with a network of over 1,000 partner organizations throughout the country, including, schools, clinics, local governments and religious institutions, NGOs, and civil society organizations. With the support of this network, ANF reaches the poorest communities, significantly impacting thousands of families.

Over the past 25 years, in conjunction with strategic partners, ANF has contributed to the construction of 20,900 homes for impoverished families benefiting more than 105,500 individuals. During this period, more than 100,000 people have benefitted from integral interventions in water, sanitation, and hygiene, such as the construction of 5,562 domiciliary water connections, 53 water systems, 148 water wells, and 10,472 sanitation facilities. ANF has supported the construction of 141 school classrooms, and over 100 community buildings for clinics, feeding centers, computer labs, and training centers.

Fulfilling its mission of supporting the most vulnerable sectors, ANF has aided the recovery of more than 564 children who suffered nutritional deficit while 598,997 people have participated in meals programs. Furthermore, 2,089 families in rural areas have been able to improve their incomes through different agricultural projects.

2) CONTEXT

Poverty and the nutritional situation in Nicaragua

Poverty is the primary cause of food insecurity and hunger in Nicaragua, which is the second poorest country in the western hemisphere. In fact, *about 39% of the population is considered poor and 7.6% of the population lives in extreme poverty conditions*. The incidence of poverty is particularly severe in rural areas, where 42% of the Nicaraguan population lives. In this region, about 58.8% of individuals survive with less than two U.S. dollars per day.¹

The local effects of climate change and natural disasters are also related to food insecurity. Nicaragua is highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes, droughts, and earthquakes. ***Indeed, Nicaragua ranks fourth in the world for vulnerability to climate change***². Thus, families from rural areas face starvation when severe droughts affect their crops as they lack the capacity to respond to their basic needs. In this context, parents are unable to provide daily nutritious food to their children who are particularly affected by nutritional deficiencies. Food shortages can result in long-term afflictions that include severe developmental retardation, anemia, increased risk of infection, weak immune systems, and impaired brain development.

As a matter of fact, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that *nearly 17%³ of Nicaraguan children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition. In rural areas, chronic malnutrition reaches up to 21%*. This implies that almost one million people have inadequate dietary energy intake. Within the country's poorest regions, FAO also reports at least 94,000 households fluctuating between food security and insecurity.

3) PROJECT'S BACKGROUND

ANF collaborates with community-based associations (CBAs) such as Rainbow Network that serves children through the Afterschool Reinforcement Program. In the rural community of San Andres, ANF supports this program by providing highly nutritious, protein-rich meals to 96 children. Elementary students from the community are divided into five groups to receive tutoring led by recipients of the Rainbow High School Scholarship.

During the Afterschool Reinforcement Program, children do their homework, receive tutoring, and eat meals prepared by organized groups of mothers from the community. Currently, ANF provides vitamin-fortified Manna Pack rice and soy to the proposed beneficiaries. The product contains several nutrients (vitamin A, D, E, calcium, zinc, iron, etc.) and includes 12 g. of protein per serving.

ANF is requesting your support to enhance children's access to highly nutritious food, as the Manna Pack does not include essential nutritional complements as the ones provided by vegetables, fruits, and a variety of proteins for a balanced diet. Thus, the proposed project is essential to guarantee access to highly nutritious, protein-rich foods, improving the health of these children.

1 International Foundation for the Global Economic Challenge (FIDEG) 2016, Households survey to measure poverty in Nicaragua, 2015 report, accessed in November 2016, http://fideg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/INFORME_DE_RESULTADOS_DE_LA_ENCUESTA_2015_-_Versin_WEB_270616.pdf

2 "Global Climate Risk Index" accessed in April, 2018, <https://germanwatch.org/fr/download/16411.pdf>

3 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Central America Data: Food and Nutrition Security Data", <http://www.fao.org/in-action/pesa-centroamerica/noticias/detail-events/es/c/276607/>

4) WHO IS THE TARGET POPULATION?

The target population are children from the semirural community of San Andres in the municipality of Ciudad Sandino, Department of Managua. Most children are between 7-12 years' old and study at the local elementary school. Sadly, in semirural communities, teenage pregnancy is a common issue. Thus, many of the targeted beneficiaries have been raised by single mothers who did not complete high school and work in temporal/informal jobs.

5) CHALLENGE

- **What is the problem?**

Children in the community of San Andres suffer from deficient intake of nutrients in their diets, particularly from low consumption of fruits and vegetables. The targeted beneficiaries lack nutritious meals in their households because their parents do not have the resources to acquire enough food and to practice proper eating habits.

Unfortunately, poverty hinders the possibilities of improving their diets and adopting healthy habits. Consequently, poor nutrition can cause several health issues such as stunted growth, or below-average height caused by chronic malnutrition, and a decreased cognitive ability. This risk is higher in children between 10-12 years' old who need more nutrients for their development. Furthermore, children in this community are affected by intestinal worms and most of them have never been dewormed. This problem impedes the absorption of nutrients and makes children more vulnerable to illnesses.

Finally, mothers cook the meals for children with firewood; which has a negative impact on their health, causing respiratory illnesses. This practice harms the ecosystem, causes more expenses as families have to buy wood, and implies burns risks and fire accidents for children.

6) SOLUTION

- **What do you want to achieve through this intervention?**

This intervention aims to improve the access to nutritious foods for children who participate in the Afterschool Reinforcement Program. The meals that children receive at the reinforcement program are essential for their overall development because they do not have access to healthy food in their homes and often go to school hungry. In some cases, this meal is the only one they will have during the day. The proposed project is a match to ANF's Meals Program which will provide fruits, vegetables, chicken, beans, vegetable oil, among other ingredients, to complement the meals that children receive three days per week in the afterschool program.

Children will also participate in deworming campaigns in order to better absorb nutrients. An eco-stove will be provided to expend less money in wood, reduce harms to health caused by smoke inhalation, protect the ecosystem, and avoid burns risks. A key component of the project is the implementation of a nutrition education campaign which will include the participation of parents and children in talks, workshops, and activities. Moreover, the intervention proposes the building of a garden to harvest a variety of foods. The garden will work as a pedagogic platform for children and their parents to grow vegetables, fruits, and legumes. In this way, children will relate the harvest of foods with a healthy diet while fostering environmental awareness.

According to FAO, "There is growing evidence that food production alone makes little impact on dietary practices unless it is backed by nutrition education. Conversely, the combination of nutrition

education and vegetable gardening has a proven impact on diet”.⁴ Consequently, ANF aims to implement a holistic intervention that combines access to nutritious food, deworming activities, nutrition education, and gardening.

Activities

- Delivery of Mana Packs
- Purchase and delivery of ingredients such as fruits, vegetables, chicken, vegetable oil, and more to complement the meal of the school reinforcement program
- Purchase of eco-stove, cookware, and nutrition education material.
- Deworming campaign
- Talks and ludic activities for children to foster healthy eating habits
- Workshops for parents on nutrition education
- Training sessions for the establishment of a garden to harvest vegetables, fruits, and legumes

7) PROJECT'S GOAL

The project's goal is to improve food security and nutrition of 96 children from the school reinforcement program in the Community of San Andres, Municipality of Ciudad Sandino.

8) EXPECTED RESULTS

Expected Result I:

Improved access to healthy and nutritious meals for 96 children from the community of San Andres.

Expected Result II:

Acquired healthy eating habits among 96 children from the community of San Andres.

Expected Result III:

Promoted education about the harvest of nutritious foods among 96 children from the community of San Andres.

9) LONG-TERM IMPACT

The project will help 96 children to improve their food security and nutrition through access to healthy meals, nutrition education, and the harvesting of foods that provide a balanced diet. ***This project will enable children to develop and grow in good health; reach their full academic potential, and practice good eating habits for the rest of their lives.***

⁴ "A new deal for school gardening". FAO. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1689e/i1689e00.pdf>