

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners, Wisconsin National Guard and UNA Collaboration
Strengthening Agriculture and Rural Development
July 22 – July 30, 2005

Major Activities, Observations, and Recommendations by:

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NICARAGUAN COUNTERPARTS/COLLABORATORS: Ronald Blandón, Wisconsin-Nicaragua Partners; Sandra Lovo, Director of External Relations, National Agriculture University [UNA]; Juan Francisco Rodriguez, Director, The Ruben Darío Foundation for Development.

PHASE I (PREPARATION)

Despite the unavoidably tight time frame to organize programming in-country I felt we were successful. Through communication with the above mentioned Nicaraguan Counterparts I was able to organize and prepare for four significant activities in Nicaragua:

1. Lectures on “Rural Development and Extension Techniques” to undergraduate students at the UNA satellite campuses in Juigalpa, and Camoapa.
2. Consultation and advising the UNA Office for External Relations, including the development of an in-house strategic plan for strengthening the office.
3. Consulting and advising the Director of the Ruben Darío Foundation for Development on their rural youth development programming efforts underway at their Ciudad Darío Center.
4. Conducting a day-long workshop for small farmers residing in the remote rural village of San Estebán, near Ciudad Darío.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- This was a new type of program for all of us, and we learned a lot. In future events we will have more time and will be able to use the lessons we learned this time to our advantage and to the advantage of our Nicaraguan partners. I feel that in the future we should give more attention to planning for the financing of in-country logistics relating to transportation, interpreters, and general expenses of host organizations essential to our activities.
- I would also recommend we try teaming our Wisconsin participants so that a Spanish speaker accompanies a non-Spanish speaker. When this is done it eliminates the need for an interpreter and with more time to prepare for the visit we can also ensure the specialities of the two team members would be complimentary. This model worked effectively for Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners when we implemented the Farmer to Farmer Program. At least for involvement by UW-Extension participants this model can be easy to implement.
- In my case, and probably in the case of other UW-Extension participants, programming in rural communities, outside of Managua, is where I feel we can have the most impact. UNA is a great contact, for me especially in getting us teaching in their two satellite campuses in Juigalpa and Camoapa. To expand future programming into underserved rural communities I recommend we make heavier use of Ronald Blandón because of his knowledge of rural development in Nicaragua, his past experience and demonstrated success with the Farmer to Farmer Program, and the network the WI-Nicaragua Partners in Nicaragua has to offer.

PHASE II (EXECUTION)

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES, BENEFICIARIES, AND RESULTS

1. Lectures on “Rural Development and Extension Techniques” to undergraduate students at the UNA satellite campuses in Juigalpa, and Camoapa.

Juigalpa, July 24: 40 students, 26 male, 14 female.

Camoapa, July 29: 19 students, 11 male, 8 female

Results: UNA graduates are frequently employed by NGOs to work in rural communities in their specialties (agronomy, animal husbandry, etc.) However, because those communities are so underserved, often times they are requested and expected to work to organize local communities, train or assist community members to lead groups, and to facilitate program planning with community members. Through these lectures these students will be better prepared to handle those responsibilities when placed upon them.

2. Consultation and advising the UNA Office for External Relations, including the development of an in-house strategic plan for strengthening the office.

Managua, UNA Campus, July 23, 25, 26: Participant: Sandra Lovo, Director of External Relations

Results: Development of a strategic plan and a set of action steps the department will pursue to strengthen its position within the UNA, and to increase the effectiveness of its work on campus.

3. Consulting and advising the Director of the Ruben Darío Foundation for Development on their rural youth development programming efforts underway at their Ciudad Darío Center.

Ciudad Darío, July 26: Participants: Ruben Darío Foundation staff at the Ciudad Darío Center: Executive Director, National Country Director, Micro-Credit program director, Program Coordinators for Youth Development programs in sports, musical performance, traditional dance, painting, woodworking, food processing, computers, and youth radio programs. 11 professional staff, 6 male, 5 female.

Results: Clarified needs and program priorities with staff. Opened lines of communication for future assistance and communication.

4. Conducting a day-long workshop for small farmers residing in the remote rural village of San Estebán, near Ciudad Darío.

San Esteban, Municipality of Dario, Department of Matagalpa, July 27: 23 participants: 14 males (12 adults, two youth) 17 females (13 adults, four youth).

Results: Formation of the “Self-help committee for community development in San Esteban”. Developed a one-year action plan for collaborating with the Ruben Darío Foundation for Development to hold training programs on small grains, grain storage methods, small animal production, and select micro-enterprises. Action plan includes contacting neighboring communities in the same watershed to share resources and identify mutual needs. Trained eight Agronomists (UNA graduates) on the techniques to repeat this workshop in other communities in the watershed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Follow up on future visits with the Foundation for Development in Ciudad Darío.
- Stronger reliance on the WI-Nic partners office and staff for advance programming in underserved communities in future visits.
- More self-reliance by myself and future participants for our own transportation in-country.