
**FIRST SEMESTER REPORT
“CHORTI BI-NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
WORLD NEIGHBORS LATIN AMERICA”**

Period: March to August 2009
Supported by: Kenoli Foundation
Prepared by: Flor de María Milla, Mynor Canjura
Supervision: Floridalma López y Larry Paul

I. Introduction

The Chorti Bi-National Rural Development Project works with six communities: San Francisco, Nueva San Isidro, La Laguna, El Barbasco, San Rafael and Aldea Nueva in the west of Honduras. These are marginalized communities that are predominantly made up of indigenous Chorti Maya people.

Prior to beginning program activities, a preliminary study was undertaken in which leaders of the six communities participated. During meetings, leaders explained their most common needs, which include the strengthening of local organizational capacities community health, sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods, gender equity, and, community management of natural resources. These key needs have converted into the focal areas of the project.

With the results of the preliminary community study in hand and the understanding that any project would have a strong emphasis on the theme of health, World Neighbors (WN) undertook the next step of finding someone to assume responsibility to develop the proposal—*holistic rural development with a strong focus on health*—promoting the employment opportunity by radio and with development organizations in the area. As a result of this process, Flor de Maria Milla, an auxiliary nurse with studies in business administration and with considerable experience in projects and programs in rural health, was selected.

In March 2009, work began with visits to the communities to get to know the local context, community leaders and actors. During this semester the most important activities undertaken were the promotion and socialization of the project, the motivation of participants, workshops, and coordination with the Ministry of Health.

The main program objectives are:

- a) Strengthen the organizational capacity of local groups and community members for endogenous development.
- b) Reduce the incidence of preventable diseases in children through education and supporting local health committees.
- c) Increase food security through the adoption of sustainable agriculture methods to improve production for family consumption and sale.
- d) Increase the status of women producers promoting opportunities for them to exercise greater control over family assets and decision making.
- e) Develop a sustainable resource management plan principally focused on water and forests.

The activities realized in the time period of the report cover three main areas.

1. Project Commencement

Flor de Maria took part in a participative base-line study in another WN project in order to familiarize herself with the development work methodology. Subsequently, Flor undertook an immersion process to get to know local leaders and community dynamics and processes in the Copan Ruins area. During these visits, the results of the preparatory study were shared, prioritizing central needs and analyzing the best ways in which tackle them. Further, identification of local participants and the organization of community health committees were realized to implement actions related to monitoring health in the Chorti communities involved in this project.

For WN, institutional relations are a priority, and so accordingly the project was shared with the Secretary of Health and other NGOs that work in the area of influence, with the objective of coordinating and following-up on activities related to health (the participation of volunteers in monthly meetings with state community health workers and vigilance of preventable diseases such as respiratory infections and diarrhea sickness). Also, meetings with the Public Health Secretary were attended to learn about infant mortality and disease indices in the area.

2. Training of Community Personnel in Health

Five workshops were realized to train the health committees in personal hygiene. The following areas were covered.

- ✓ Cleanliness and hygiene in the home
- ✓ Water management
- ✓ Use of latrines
- ✓ Areas and focal points of contamination

Other workshops with groups of women addressed the theme of nutrition covering the elaboration of nutritional recipes that use local community produce (fruits, vegetables and in season edible green leaves). The aim is that the women have the opportunity to learn and prepare these recipes in their home to improve the nutrition of their children and family. With these same groups, informal discussions were also held addressing the issue of family planning.

3. Training to Strengthen Local Capacities and Manage Community Resources

With support of two external consultants, the technical capacities of community leaders concerning project proposal and formulation were developed. During the consultancies, different proposals were made and accordingly the projects of 'The Recovery of Native Chickens', in two communities and 'Health' and 'Potable Water' in two others were chosen, as well as training in administrative processes.

Further, capacity building was also undertaken with the *Council of Indigenous Rural Women of San Rafael* with the aim of empowering them in themes such as organization and self-esteem. As a result of proposals from the council, agreements were also made for a project to provide credits to fund small businesses.

During this semester, the design of natural resources community management plan in San Francisco was initiated.

IV. Table of Indicators for the First Fiscal Year

The following table shows the advances made with respect to the objectives established for the first fiscal year.

Area	First Year Goal	Results, March to August	Observations
Strengthening of Local Capacities (SLC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Six Councils have elaborated base-line studies and development indicators in the first year. 2. Six Councils have advanced their <i>state of organizational development</i>. 3. The Indigenous Councils have developed their Plans of Community Action prioritizing their needs. 	Local communities and organizations were approached and agreements made.	This initial period of intervention has focused on gaining the trust of people and identifying leaders in each community. In the next semester a consultant will be contracted to undertake a base-line study.
Community Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thirty families have achieved selective improvements in the concept of Healthy Homes. 2. Six communities begin to start work with their local Health Committees 3. Six Health Committees have elaborated their plans of community action. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 27 families have initiated Healthy Home practices, 7 with the construction of barriers to prevent the entrance of animals and 20 with nutritional recipes. 2. Two communities working with their Health Committees La Laguna and San Rafael. 3. Two communities (La Laguna and San Rafael) have elaborated their community action plans 	<p>The Health Comities received training in the themes of hygiene as part of the strategy of Healthy Homes.</p> <p>Twenty women were trained in the theme of nutrition.</p> <p>Four nutritional recipes were elaborated.</p>
Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods (SARL)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two groups of agriculturalists develop community projects by the end of the first year. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two groups of nine women are in the process of developing the project 'The Recovery of Native Chickens' in the communities of San Francisco and Barbasco. 	<p>The women have built their enclosures for their chickens.</p> <p>In September trainings will begin on native chicken management (vaccinations, how to make concentrate feed).</p>
Gender Equity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thirty women form part of the savings and credit group. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A group of women are in the process of developing a small business in the community of San Rafael. 	Trainings have been realized in the themes of self-esteem, administration and organization.
Community Management of Natural Resources (CMNR)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One community has a CMNR plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The community of San Francisco has begun to elaborate a CMNR plan 	The development of CMNR plans is expected in the next semester

III. Activities Realized During the Semester

The following table describes the actions undertaken during the semester, separating the participation of men and women in the various activities.

Components of Community Health			
Activities Realized	Men	Women	Total
1. Identify and train five Community Health Committees.	19	16	35
2. Build capacity in the themes of hygiene (personal hygiene, sanitation in the home, water treatment, latrine use, how to avoid contamination).	19	16	35
3. Elaboration of two community action plans to intervene in health.	9	9	18
4. Two campaigns to clean communities in coordination with the project 'Network for Community Health' and financed by the Canadian Red Cross, three Health Committees have been trained in the prevention of respiratory infections and diarrhea sickness.	25	30	55
5. Training in the theme of nutrition and the elaboration of 4 nutritional recipes with 20 women.	9	18	27
6. Coordination with the Secretary of Health to compel them to provide essential health care to Chorti communities in the area.			
7. Promote the participation of volunteers in meetings with health promoters organized monthly at the health center.		20	20
8. Home visits to address the theme of family planning directly with the woman.			
9. Support the Health Committee of La Laguna with their project proposal for a community health centre.			

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods			
Activities Realized	Men	Women	Total
1. Consultancy on project proposal and formation, from which were developed five community project proposals.	18	43	61
2. Two communities in the initial stages of a project: The Recovery of Native Chickens.		18	18

Gender Equity			
Activities Realized	Men	Women	Total
1. Training of the Indigenous Rural Women's Council (IRWC) of San Rafael in the themes of administration, organization and self-esteem.		9	9
2. The IRWC of San Rafael is in the process of developing a small business.		6	6
Natural Resource Management	Men	Women	Total
1. A consultancy was begun on natural resource management in San Francisco given that this community has a high percentage of forest not being utilized.	9	6	15
Strengthening of Local Capacities			
This period of the project intervention served to gain the trust and identify leaders within the communities. In the next semester, a consultant will be contracted to carry out a base-line study including an analysis of the <i>state of organizational development</i> .			

IV. Progress Indicators

World Neighbors has identified five progress indicators for this project:

1. Families that have reached at least one change in the strategy of Healthy Homes.
2. Number of agriculturalists that have assumed the role of volunteer promoters.
3. Number of micro-credit groups (for savings and credit) and the amount of money they manage.
4. Number of Councils that have realized a base-line study and defined their plan for community work.
5. Councils that have defined their *state of organizational development*.

Below, information on the progress made in the five key indicators during the six months of the project's existence is provided.

1. Families that have managed at least one change in the Healthy Homes (HH) strategy.

Community	Total number of houses	Nutritional recipes	Barriers	Cleaning Campaigns Jornadas de Limpieza
San Francisco	56			1
Nueva San Isidro	32			
La Laguna	65	20	5	1
Barbasco	71			
San Rafael	81		2	
Aldea Nueva	19			
Total	324	20	7	2

27 families have realized one change through the strategy of HH; 20 with the elaboration of nutritional recipes and 7 with kitchen barriers.

2. Number of agriculturalists that have assumed the role of being volunteer promoters.

Community	Total number of houses	Chicken coups
San Francisco	56	9
Nueva San Isidro	32	
La Laguna	65	
Barbasco	71	9
San Rafael	81	
Aldea Nueva	19	
Total	324	18

18 agriculturalists have assumed the role of volunteer promoters. The first technology implemented were the chicken coups in two communities. This technology will be replicated by other participants and communities.

3. Number of microcredit organizations for savings and credit and the quantity of money managed.

Community	Number of homes	No. of micro-credit orgs.	Quantity of money managed
San Francisco	56	1	Lps. 35000
Nueva San Isidro	32	1	Lps. 32000
La Laguna	65	1	Lps. 54000
Barbasco	71	1	Lps. 23000
San Rafael	81	1	Lps. 12000
Aldea Nueva	19	1	Lps. 35000
Total	324	6	Lps. 191000

Note: World Neighbors has yet to incorporate funds into the microcredit organizations given that the strategy is still being developed. It is hoped that in the next semester they will be managing funds to implement appropriate technologies.

4. Number of Councils that have undertaken their base-line studies and defined their community work plan.

Community	Base-line study realized	Council participants
San Francisco	No	0
Nueva San Isidro	No	0
La Laguna	No	0
Barbasco	No	0
San Rafael	No	0
Aldea Nueva	No	0
Total	No	0

5. Councils that have defined their *state of organizational development*.

Community	SOD actual	SOD 2011
San Francisco	0	0
Nueva San Isidro	0	0
La Laguna	0	0
Barbasco	0	0
San Rafael	0	0
Aldea Nueva	0	0
Total	0	0

World Neighbors set as a goal for the first semester the program's establishment and gaining the trust of communities. In the second semester, investments will be made in microcredit organizations and a base-line study will be conducted with the participation of the community and an external consultant. The baseline study includes a tool for analyzing the *state of organizational development*.

V. Conclusions and Lessons Learnt

1. Initiating a new program requires sufficient vigor to identify problems, and to comprehend the local development context and dynamics among the key community, institutional and other actors. It is also fundamentally important to invest sufficient time to select adequate personnel to ensure the successful execution of a *holistic development program* focused on the people.
2. The initial phase of the program was focused on presenting the preliminary study, promoting the project, identifying community leaders, gaining the trust of the communities, and developing coordination with the Health Secretary and NGOs working in zone. Apart from these actions, various other activities contemplated in the Operational Plan were realized, in particular those focused on health and agriculture.
3. The paternalistic methods of other organizations have affected the implementation of various project work components. For example, not all participants perceive the possibility of access to a loan to improve their homes to be of significant importance or opportunity. In light of this situation, work around personal and collective motivation has been carried out to diminish dependency.
4. Given the concerns and doubts of women over family planning, it was deemed necessary to address the issue in an individual and collective manner, particularly given that many experience social pressure (from peers or women neighbors) to continue to have babies even though they are not necessarily intended or desired. In the communities, there are many myths and taboos on the issue; for example, "you must have as many children as God commands" is a common expression that you hear. For this and other reasons, it is important to understand the influence of cultural and religious factors when working in the issue.
5. In trainings and work to strengthen women's groups, it was perceived that men exercise decision making power of over the woman, up to the point where some male community leaders had to be convinced to "give the woman permission" to begin work.

VI. Priority Actions for the Next Semester

No.	Activity	Responsible	Date
1	Conduct the base line study including the <i>state of organizational development</i> analysis.	Flor de Maria Consultant	October-December 2009
2	Follow-up and promote the implementation of the Healthy Homes concept	Flor de Maria	September 2009 to February 2010
3	Promote the elaboration of nutritional recipes and training in nutrition in the other 5 communities.	Flor de Maria	September 2009 October 2009 November 2009
4	Support the promoters, and, begin capacity building in vaccinating, the elaboration of concentrate and, managing Native Chickens in the communities of San Francisco and Barbasco.	Mynor Canjura	September 2009 October 2009 November 2009
5	Support the San Rafael IRWC in the implementation of their small business.	Flor de Maria	January 2010
6	Finalize the construction of the Community Natural Resource Management Plan in the community of San Francisco.	Flor de Maria Milla Consultant	December 2009.
7	Develop the project proposals presented by the 6 community leaders.	Flor de Maria Indigenous Councils	October 2009

IX. Photo Montage

