



**PROGRESS REPORT
NSEL – NICARAGUA
May 15, 2009**

1. Highlights

- A dialogue table has been convened for the discussion of Chronic Renal Insufficiency (CRI) issues.
- A needs assessment has identified options for short, immediate and long term measures that will improve health care and support for people afflicted with CRI and their families.
- Agreement has been reached to provide support to families affected by CRI, which includes food support over two years period, and assistance with health care services.
- Participants at the dialogue table selected Boston University to conduct the epidemiology scoping study for CRI in Nicaragua.

2. Progress after Assessment Report

During CAO Ombudsman assessment period (March 31, 2008 – November 18, 2008), the CAO determined whether and how stakeholders could seek resolution of the issues presented on the complaint. The specific outcome reached during this period was the preliminary Stakeholders Assessment Report. The report is a record of opinions and ideas conveyed to the CAO team during the course of its assessment. It also contains some suggestions from the CAO about possible ideas for addressing the issues that have been raised in the complaint. CAO shared the report and its assessment with all parties and received feedback from all of them.

The preliminary CAO Stakeholder Assessment Report identified three themes and objectives for future work:

- Identify the causes of Chronic Renal Insufficiency (CRI) and receive appropriate support to address the effects of the disease affecting the community around the San Antonio Sugar Mill;
- Evaluate ways to enhance the availability of clean water to people near the expanded operations of the Ingenio San Antonio; and
- Enhance the existing mechanisms to address worker as well as community grievances.

The Report was made available to the public on December 2008, and can be found on CAO web site under documents.



To address CRI, the process to create a dialogue table was conducted in accordance with the guidelines established in the Framework Agreement for Dialogue proposed by the CAO on November 20, 2008, to which NSEL (Nicaragua Sugar Estates Limited) and ASOCHIVIDA (*Asociación Chichigalpa por la vida*/ Association Chichigalpa for life) acceded separately. See Framework Agreement for dialogue on CRI.

Both NSEL and ASOCHIVIDA expressed their will to continue to work with the CAO Ombudsman on health issues surrounding CRI. As presented in the framework agreement, the dialogue sessions will focus on and be limited to:

1. Identifying and addressing the causes of CRI; and
2. Options for support to local communities where there is a prevalence of CRI.

A dialogue table has been convened under the auspices of the CAO for participants to discuss the details of these two courses of action. Three dialogue meetings have occurred since February 12, 2009. After the third dialogue at the end of March the Facilitator from FFLA (*Fundación Futuro Latino Americano*), Juan Dumas, produced a summary of the issues discussed during the first three dialogue meetings. For more details see the Facilitator's summary for the three first dialogue meetings between NSEL and ASOCHIVIDA from April 3 of 2009.

For the first course of action, CAO has contracted a medical advisor to conduct a health needs assessment. Doctor David Silver, who has been hired to conduct this work, started his work during the week of March 9, 2009 by conducting three focus groups with members of ASOCHIVIDA to better understand the health needs they currently are facing. The groups included people afflicted with CRI and widows whose spouses have died from the disease. The medical advisor also conducted key informant interviews with physicians and health officials involved in medical care for CRI patients. Based on the health needs assessment findings, a set of short and long-term measures to improve care for those afflicted by CRI was presented to the participants at the dialogue table. The report will shortly be accessible to the public.

Regarding short-term needs, an exchange of expressions from both participants, ASOCHIVIDA and NSEL, occurred during the month of March, which provided an opportunity to start specific and concrete discussions about measures that could be implemented quickly. See Facilitator's summary for the three first dialogue meetings between NSEL and ASOCHIVIDA from April 3 of 2009, and Facilitator's summary for the dialogue process on CRI from April 30 of 2009.

For the second course of action, CAO dialogue process helped parties jointly define the criteria or principles a study on CRI causes must have for its outcome to be trustworthy. Both parties agreed that the study must be conducted by a team that fulfills the following four requirements:



- Proven scientific capacity (formation and experience).
- Neutrality as paramount.
- No links to any political-partisanship tendencies.
- Be a foreign institution.

With these participants determined criteria, CAO prepared a Terms of Reference for an epidemiology scoping study for CRI in Nicaragua and solicited proposals. Nine proposals were presented from well-known universities and private consulting firms. The dialogue participants, both from the affected former workers group (ASOCHIVIDA) and the company (NSEL), worked with the CAO to choose experts that all of them felt able to trust. Participants evaluated the proposals by considering the following elements: 1) neutrality-credibility; 2) quality and approach of the technical proposal; 3) team members, and 4) experience working with communities and its participatory approach. Participants at the dialogue table decided that Boston University will conduct the epidemiology scoping study of CRI in Nicaragua. See [Facilitator's summary for the dialogue process on CRI from April 30 of 2009.](#)

Considering the CRI theme some progress has been already reached, and participants have demonstrated their continued engagement with the dialogue process. They have also shown their willingness to continue the discussions on how to find solutions to this complex problem. CAO has recognized the great commitment the participants have shown in this process.

Regarding the other two themes identified in the preliminary Stakeholder Assessment Report, water and grievances, CAO has continued to work with NSEL and the communities of Goyena and Abangasca to address these issues and to agree on specific next steps.