



COUNTRY PROFILE



USAID focuses its assistance on achieving increased trade and investment, the development of a competitive, market-oriented economy and improved environmental management to help Nicaragua take advantage of the opportunities of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade (CAFTA-DR) and other trade agreements. In 2007, USAID-assisted producers had sales in local, regional, and international markets totaling \$22 million.

NICARAGUA SNAPSHOT

Independence from Spain: 1821
Population: 5.7 million (2007 est)
Area: 129,494 Km²

USAID IN NICARAGUA

<http://nicaragua.usaid.gov/>

OVERVIEW

Nicaragua has made important strides in the development of democratic institutions, the protection of civil rights, and the establishment of a market economy. However, corruption, and the politicization of many public institutions continue to impede the consolidation of democracy and rapid economic growth.

Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in the Americas and anticipated progress in several democratic indicators (open governments, rule of law and business and investor confidence) proceeds at a slow pace.



PROGRAMS

GOVERNING JUSTLY & DEMOCRATICALLY

To strengthen democracy, USAID supports criminal justice reforms, prosecution of acts of corruption, increased government transparency, adherence to codes of ethics by both the government and private sector, and strengthening public oversight.

The program provides support to the Public Ministry, the Attorney General's Office, the Public Defenders Office and the Forensic Medicine Institute, all key justice sector institutions; and to the Supreme Electoral Council, the institution that oversees elections.

USAID assists civil society organizations that promote legal reform, access to information, advocate for government transparency, and increase public awareness of citizens' rights.

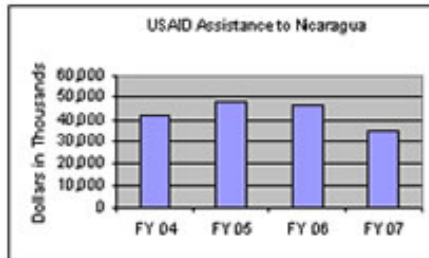
In 2006, USAID's election support program trained thousands of election observers and reached nearly all Nicaraguan voters through massive Get Out the Vote campaigns. Post election activities helped produce 65,000 additional voter ID cards and trained all municipal registrars.

USAID made significant contributions to the successful implementation of the Criminal Procedures Code that helps give citizens access to a fair trial. Implementation of the code brings Nicaragua in line with progress in criminal justice reform throughout the region. One of the most important achievements under this program was the passage of an internationally acceptable Judicial Career Law. The law defines tenure for judges for the first time, and establishes ethical standards for judges, important steps in developing a non-partisan, transparent judicial branch of government.



COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

**USG ASSISTANCE
TO NICARAGUA**



In 2007, USAID supported the enactment of a Freedom of Information Law and the drafting of a political party finance reform bill. Over 700 government officials and 7,000 civil society representatives received anti-corruption training. Access to justice was expanded with seven new community-based mediation centers, (bringing the total to 18 nationwide), the training of justice facilitators, and more public defenders offices.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

USAID focuses its assistance on achieving increased trade and investment and the development of a competitive, market-oriented economy. The program emphasizes market-led, rural economic diversification and trade capacity building to help Nicaragua take advantage of the opportunities of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).

In 2007, building on the momentum created by the 17% increase in exports during the first year of CAFTA-DR implementation, USAID supported the drafting and harmonization of 15 laws and regulations that upgrade trade and investment promotion.

USAID assistance during the last year helped Nicaraguan producers to increase their sales of basic staples, specialty coffee, tubers, roots, fruits, and vegetables in local, regional, and international markets. In 2007, USAID-assisted producers had sales totaling \$22 million and programs generated 18,000 new jobs.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE – HEALTH AND EDUCATION

USAID assists the Nicaraguan government’s social sector ministries to improve management practices and quality of services. Programs help improve reproductive, maternal, and child health services, and support better nutrition and hygiene practices.

USAID health programs cover 17 of the 22 general hospitals and community health programs reach 1,300 of the poorest communities. In 2007, over 36,000 persons were tested for HIV. Maternal deaths in institutions fell 35%, and in 12 hospitals that receive USAID assistance, mortality rates for pneumonia and respiratory distress fell 55% and 32% respectively.

In 2007, USAID’s quality primary education program expanded to 1,753 model schools, reaching 35% of teachers and students nationwide. Private sector alliances in health and education leveraged \$2.4 million through seven new partnerships.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In 2007, USAID disaster relief reached nearly 100,000 persons affected by the country’s three natural disasters (Hurricane Felix, Flooding and Leptospirosis).

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