

Senda de Libertad Project for Children and Youth

Project number	39907235
Title	Children – Youth – Democracy
Countries	Nicaragua
Summary	The evaluation’s findings are summarized in the following points:

- The project is relevant in its essentials and has the potential to meet the project’s goals and objectives. □
- There is a local commitment from both the authorities and civil society to the project, which is an important condition for sustainability. It is recommended to establish formal cooperation agreements with authorities, NGOs and key actors in Ciudad Darío. □
- Project activities have a very broad approach. For greater impact in target areas and groups (problematic neighborhoods and at-risk youth) it is necessary to focus the work on these areas and groups, seeking synergies among the project’s different components. □
- For the project to run more systematically, it is important to prepare an Annual Operating Plan with objectives, indicators and activities, and also a Plan for Follow-up to be able to measure progress and evaluate the process. □
- In the continuation of the project, attention must be given to strengthening existing capacities within Freedom Path Foundation. Especially regarding staff training on topics such as values, democratic participation, gender equality, children's rights, sexuality and the prevention of alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, HIV-AIDS, etc. The Foundation should take advantage of the educational spaces that it now has to be able to include these topics in their educational processes. □
- One should request from PMU Interife a budget adjustment adapted to the new operational plan with its respective approaches. In addition, managers must ensure that they meet all the routines and procedures in the PMU Interlife’s Project Manual, especially in regard to administration and finance. □
- It is recommended that PMU Interlife provide more support, follow-up and training for new members. □

Recommendations

A. Training Strategies

- Before starting a project, a baseline study should be carried out with a global perspective.
- The target group should participate in project planning and implementation.
- To make a greater impact and be able to measure results, the work should focus on strategic areas or neighborhoods.
- Projects that have to do with children or young people at risk or social risk should always have personnel with professional skills in the field of psychosociology.

B. Networking and Cooperation

- Developing relationships with the police and municipal or provincial authorities. In the work of rescuing and providing opportunities to at-risk children and youth, it is necessary to strengthen ties between the church, authorities and police, especially to achieve an impact in "hot" or problematic areas or neighborhoods. In Ciudad Dario, the police invite Freedom Path to participate in its neighborhood meetings; at these meetings, they report on their work and get feedback from residents. The police also want to include the Foundation in its Public Safety Council. The good relations with authorities facilitate rescue work with at-risk children and youth, because they offer legal services to victims and can transfer them to shelters. Authorities trust in the Foundation's work; this was proven when they placed an 11-year-old boy who had suffered abuse in the custody of Foundation's director, Harry Ríos Bravo; the boy is temporarily staying at his house.
- Building and strengthening relationships with other NGOs. There is a need to build and strengthen relationships with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially for those that are involved in work with at-risk youth and promoting children's rights. This would allow the Foundation to access resources for building up and developing the project staff's abilities. These partnerships would also allow the Foundation to expand the services available to its target group. With a larger network, the Foundation could provide better care for at-risk youth: different partners might be able to provide resources for rehabilitation, professional training, legal services, health care, structural work to fight poverty, etc.

C. Children's Rights

- It is important that projects for children and young people have a human rights approach. Children are recognized as subjects of rights once they are educated to participate, express their views and participate in decisions having to do with them. The term active citizenship is used to speak of the knowledge, skills and abilities that should be developed in children and youth for them to know their rights, identify the problems that affect them and their community and, through debate and discussion, pose solutions to these same problems.
- Teach children about the rights of the Child from an early age so they know their rights and responsibilities and what they mean in practice. It is important that civic education begin in preschool and the elementary school grades so that children feel that their voice has value from an early age and so that the actions and decisions they make can have a positive influence on their environment.
- A question that should be asked children and young people in the project is: What are the rights of the Child and what do they mean for us in our work?

D. The civic role of churches promoting the rights of the Child

- Encourage more churches to participate in defending children's rights. In Nicaragua, few churches are actively engaged in defending children's rights. This is despite the fact that churches have the most comprehensive networks and more human capital than in any other institution. There is a need to intensify education in children's rights to protection and participation. It would be suitable for the Foundation, through its Assemblies of God Nicaragua denomination, to encourage other churches to receive training on the subject. The national campaign promoted by the Family Ministry, "Love for the smallest ones," and the materials developed for this purpose, based on the rights of the Child, can become an instrument for achieving this by training churches.
- Build and strengthen relationships with authorities and NGOs to respond to the needs of at-risk children and youth. Traditionally the church has "isolated" itself from its surroundings. And while it has worked on projects for children and youth, they generally have not been implemented together with other actors. To meet the needs of at-risk children and youth, it is necessary to have a broad network of partners who can offer services the church does not have, for example

rehabilitation services, shelters for battered women and children, medical care, legal or psychological services, professional training for young people, etc.

- A question that should be asked in churches is: What are the rights of the Child and what do they mean for us in our work?