

Food Security and Food Aid Program (USAID-Title II) Combined with Efforts to Improve Access to Portable Water and Basic Sanitation

Context

Three international nongovernmental organizations collaborated with local municipalities in Honduras to conduct multi-sector programs from 2005–2009 aimed at increasing food security and improving health and nutrition status in poor rural households. Save the Children (SCF) worked in 117 communities in south-central Honduras with assistance from USAID Food for Peace and also sought additional support to improve access to potable water and basic sanitation. Adventist Development and Relief Agency and World Vision worked in additional municipalities.

Activities/Channels

Improved food security was the major focus of this Title II program, which provided a food ration to children 6–23 months and to pregnant and lactating women. SCF also established field schools to train model farmers who developed demonstration plots. These local volunteers worked with other small agricultural producers to encourage them to plant new drought resistant crops, construct “micro-tunnel” type greenhouses, use small-scale drip irrigation systems, and store crops appropriately. With assistance from a municipal government liaison, the program encouraged small businesses (such as those involved in food processing) and helped them obtain legal status. It also supported forming small producer associations so that participants could benefit from selling in greater volumes.

The government’s ongoing community growth promotion activities (called AIN-C) provided a focal point for health and nutrition activities. Volunteer monitors identified from within the communities received training and high quality



Save the Children Honduras



A community helps rehabilitate its water system.



Community participation in latrine construction

print materials to improve counseling at the monthly AIN-C sessions and to carry out follow-up home visits to check on children with poor growth. Monitors were also trained to conduct cooking demonstrations, which included discussion of recommended feeding practices.

In addition, SCF sought funding from other national programs (PRACCAGUA—funded by the EU and USAID, and FORCUENCA—funded by the EU) to rehabilitate 35 local water systems and install four new ones and to construct pour/flush latrines and septic tanks in the target communities. They also supported communities in holding assemblies to elect or reactivate water boards, establish usage rates, chlorinate water catchment tanks, and organize maintenance of the new municipal water systems, including hiring a water technician. Communities supplied 20 percent of the unskilled manpower and local building materials for these projects, helping to ensure local ownership.

Results

Comparison of data collected at baseline and endline showed significant positive outcomes in the SCF municipalities. Among children 6–23 months, low weight-for-age (<-2SD, NCHS) was reduced from 20.5 to 10.9 percent. The program achieved a reduction in stunting among those 24–59 months from 35.1 percent to 27.5 percent.

During the project period the number of months of adequate food supply in the SCF target area increased from 7.4 to 8.3 months. Mothers demonstrated increased knowledge about the importance of variety in a child's diet. The practice of introducing solid/semi-solid foods between 6 and 8 months of age rose from 37.3 percent to 82.8 percent. The percent of mothers reporting appropriate hand washing practices rose from 58.1 percent to 90.7 percent.

Lessons

Evaluators noted a high level of collaboration with municipal government leaders, creating a strong sense of local ownership and leading to increased municipal funding for food security projects. The three program NGOs agreed on an indicator to reflect the effects of strengthened linkage between communities and local governments. The project collaborated with municipal governments to analyze lack of food security and include proposals for projects in their strategic and operational plans. Water board members gained knowledge about how to obtain new projects and identify sources of funding. The evaluation noted that improved water systems also allowed more free time for women and an increase in community leadership capacities.

In general, the high level of skills achieved by community volunteers and their ability to serve as models in their communities was important to the project's success. With the project ending, the evaluation noted the challenge of sustaining activities of the community monitors.

Resources

Public Law (PI) 480 Title II Program in Honduras, FY 2005-2009, Final Evaluation Report. July-September 2009. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACP894.pdf

Contact

Edith Rivera: edithriver@savethechildrenhonduras.org