ID: MDGF-2039

Thematic Window: Children, Food Security and Nutrition

Request for Proposals Round: Round 1 (26/04/2007 - 31/12/2009)

Country: El Salvador

Amount Requested: 

Duration: 36 Months

Application Title: Protecting children: towards a coordinated food security and nutritional programme for El Salvador

Attached Documents:

- Additional Background Information: annexfinal.doc
- Results Framework: resultsfinal.xls
- Budget: definitive.xls
- Capabilities Statement by UN Participating Organizations: Capabilities statement by UN Participating Organizations_10.doc

A. Applicant Information

Region: Latin America and the Caribbean

Country Classification:
- Lower Middle Income Country
- Medium HDI, according to UNDP's 2006 Human Development Report

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Alternate Focal Point:
### B. Concept Note

### I. Programme Summary:

A sharp decline in remittances augmented by rising food and fuel prices has spiked poverty and malnutrition levels in El Salvador. In 2008, extreme poverty rose by 6.5% and 87% of poor households reduced food consumption levels. El Salvador’s important gains toward fulfilling the MDGs, in areas like hunger and poverty reduction (MDG 1), and improved infant mortality rates (MDG 4) are seriously threatened. This initiative addresses Areas 1, 2 & 3—MDG-F window-by working to build consensus and strengthen state stewardship capacity to set forth integrated approaches to alleviate child hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, benefiting institutions at the national level and locally in three poverty-stricken Northeastern municipalities. It will advance integration of monitoring & evaluation information systems and promote multi-stakeholder consensus in the design and implementation of child nutrition and food security plans with leading participation of women and indigenous populations.

### II. Background and Rationale:

Remittances to LAC countries displayed negative growth in 2008. In August 2008, the drop in remittances spread to El Salvador a country where remittance flows constitutes 18% of GDP. (1) While food and fuel price increases may have moderated in recent months, prices remain much higher than in previous years and show few signs of declining significantly. As a result, poor families in El Salvador are being pushed to the brink of survival, causing irreparable damage to children’s health. Thus, attaining MDG 1 constitutes a daunting challenge for El Salvador. In 2003 nationwide malnutrition was 10.3% (urban, 6.9%; rural, 13.2%). (2) However, national indicators hide gross urban/rural inequities. For example, while in 2007 chronic malnutrition among children under 5 years of age in urban areas was 10.62%; in rural areas it reached 19.21%. (3) Micronutrients deficiency among women is particularly troubling given that 40% of pregnant women are iron deficient, a contributing factor to childhood malnutrition. (4)

Presently, the Government of El Salvador (GOES) implements a conditional transfer’s social program, namely the “Solidarity Network” (SN) which targets the countries 100 poorest municipalities. (5) The SN carries out health, education, nutrition,
infrastructure and income-generating actions to benefit extremely poor families, by linking disbursements to child health and nutrition controls and school attendance. Given the current global economic crisis the main presidential candidates of the 2009 national elections have pledged to keep and strengthen SN and to make Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) a government priority.

Although the country has a FSN Policy (6) it has not been translated into an action plan. Moreover, multiple unrelated information systems impede an integrated approach to decision-making. Health, education, and agriculture ministries have incorporated FSN concepts into school curricula, and provided basic agricultural inputs to poor farmers. International stakeholders, such as USAID, EU, AECID, FAO, INCAP, UNICEF and the WFP, center their support on mitigating the consequences of poverty and malnutrition by means of a vertical-unisectoral, approach (7) focused on the individual, for example, delivery of food supplies.

The present global context demands new action that ensures coordinated development efforts among agencies, government, civil society, and private sector to fight poverty and malnutrition. This Initiative responds to this demand through a horizontal-multisectoral approach, focused on targeting social determinants to address the root causes of malnutrition and under-development to break the poverty-malnutrition-poverty cycle. Such strategy is aligned with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s appeal to tackle the global food crises (8), the Declaration of the High Level Conference on World Food Security (9) which urges the international community to take coordinated action; and the recently launched Pan American Alliance for Nutrition and Development created to coordinate and promote UN agencies efforts to fight hunger and improve nutrition, particularly among vulnerable groups. (10)

This initiative will contribute to the attainment of MDG 1, 3 and 4 by building consensus and strengthening state stewardship capacity to set forth integrated approaches to alleviate child hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity. At the State level it will benefit relevant national institutions and advance integration of monitoring & evaluation information systems to measure impact. Locally it will favor three of the countries poorest municipalities in the Northeast. These three municipalities were chosen as the intervention zone because they have the highest levels of chronic malnutrition (35.3% to 40.1%) (11) and high concentration of indigenous populations. Working in these three municipalities provides an opportunity to develop a model programme through stakeholder consensus in the design and implementation of child-centered nutrition and food security plans with leading participation of women and indigenous populations.

The proposed programme complements the efforts of UN El Salvador to achieve UNDAF Outcome 3-CH5: Contribute to a decrease in problems of food security and nutrition mainly among the most vulnerable groups. (12) UNCT responds in a coordinated fashion to the country’s priority development requests. In addition, the agencies share their expertise based on their area of competency.

III. Joint Programme Results:

Outcome 1 will contribute to achieve the priorities outlined in Area 2 of the window. The formation of an effective inter-ministry coordination mechanism for child-centered FSN to regulate, enforce and carry out surveillance. This will be achieved through the development of a National child-centered FSN Strategic Action Plan. By guiding a strategic planning process, the programme looks to build and strengthen the state stewardship competencies required to develop and institutionalize child-centered FSN policies and plans, articulating a horizontal multi-sectoral integrated approach with a strong emphasis on increasing attention and priority to gender and indigenous issues. The current lack of coordinated action among stakeholders impedes the achievement of MDG 1, 3 and 4. By fostering stewardship competencies, such as regulation, enforcement and surveillance, the programme will identify
potential synergies and encourage coordinated action towards achieving MDG 1. In order to secure stakeholder buy-in and capacity development on the child-centered FSN Action Plan, the programme will provide training and carry out awareness raising exercises.

Outcome 2 responds to the priorities set out in Area 3. By integrating the various existing information systems (health, nutrition, agriculture and education) the project aims to provide gender-disaggregated, rights-based FSN indicators which will be used in policy formulation, trend identification, and M&E of impact for children under three years and pregnant/breastfeeding women. A knowledge management strategy on child-centered FSN will also be designed and implemented to contribute to an informed debate on enhancing child nutrition and gender empowerment.

Outcome 3 responds to Area 1 by institutionalizing, in three North Eastern municipalities with high Indigenous population, a child-centered FSN strategy that improves rural family access to food through greater income generation and by strengthening Health and Education services to address effectively the FSN determinant factors for under-36-month children, and fertile/pregnant/breastfeeding mothers.

This outcome also seeks to improve child/maternal nutrition and food security by linking markets with productive chains to increase income generation in three North Eastern municipalities (see profiles in Annex A), and strengthening health and education services. This will be achieved by the institutionalization of a child-centered FSN rights-based strategy in three municipalities, with multi-stakeholder participation. Family income will also be increased through diversified agriculture, market linkages and non-agricultural activities while Health Centres and schools will be strengthened to allow them to address the social determinants of nutrition and to empower women, families and communities.

Post-program enhanced national capacities will remain in a Regulation, Enforcement and Surveillance Body and stakeholder institutions, to manage a child-centered FSN rights-based approach. Locally, among municipal officials and community representatives, capacities will entail diagnosis, planning and coordination of multi-institutional child-centered FSN localized actions; among parents, students, Health Centre and school staff and vendors, capacities will be developed to promote nutritional foods, adequate child-centered FSN habits, and FSN management by women, families and communities. Among targeted rural families income-generating skills that make use of regional economic opportunities will be enhanced.

IV. Joint Programme Design and Implementation Plan:

The joint programme design responds to the demands of the present global context on El Salvador through a horizontal-multisectoral approach, addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants that impact the individual and the family throughout the life cycle, decisively tackling gender, ethnic and social discrimination.

It targets children under three and pregnant/breastfeeding women as direct and indirect beneficiaries of child-centered FSN Strategies, and public, NGO, private sector and civil society officials as direct beneficiaries of institutional strengthening activities.

The joint programme design has three main areas: 1) strengthening state stewardship capacity to set forth integrated approaches to alleviate child hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, 2) advancing the integration of monitoring & evaluation information systems to improve surveillance and impact evaluation capacity with a gender-rights-based perspective; 3) institutionalizing a child-centered
FSN rights-based strategy in three municipalities with Indigenous populations stressing increased income generation and strengthening of local health and education services to address the social determinants of nutrition and to empower women, families and communities.

Outcome 1

- build and strengthen the state stewardship competencies to develop and institutionalize child-centered FSN policies and plans
- strengthen stakeholder capacity nationally and locally to adopt and implement the child-centered FSN Action Plan.

Outcome 2

- design mechanisms to integrate data from existing sectoral information systems to evaluate the impact and training information generators and users;
  - establish national and local child-centered FSN observatories
  - conduct investigations
  - strengthen the North Eastern FSN Forum
  - promote exchange of best practices
  - develop ICT tools for public education

Outcome 3.

- establish a qualitative and quantitative gender disaggregated baseline and M&E system
- formulate municipal child-centered FSN plans
- public education and training and the provision of FSN documentation to local libraries
- provide environment-friendly technical assistance to diversify agriculture
- create non-agriculture microenterprises among women and youth and linking them to markets. (Food-for-work would be provided as a start-up incentive in the first year).
- strengthening primary health care services
- promote consumption of nutritionally-improved and fortified foods
- promote safe water consumption, food safety and environmental sanitation in schools and homes.

The joint program gender strategy is to mandate use of gender/age disaggregated data in all information systems, apply gender-role analysis in the formulation of child-centered FSN strategies and action plans, and promote equity in the gender roles advocated in Food Security and Nutrition practices in homes and schools. The capacity of women in their roles as producers and providers of food will be strengthened in these activities.

The joint programme will build upon the existing initiatives put in place by the Ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture, promoting solid coordinating mechanisms and maximizing institutional capacities. Program implementation will be carried out in close coordination with other national partners and donor initiatives by forming inter-sectoral committees, locally and nationally.
Parallel financing opportunities may be available through government multilateral loans for the Solidarity Network programme which both leading political parties have pledged to continue, and through NGO on-going local programs aimed at the same target group. The worldwide food crisis has also raised government awareness of food security and nutrition and may result in more FSN government programs.

Sustainability of results will be ensured by building institutional capacities among those mandated with Food Security and/or Nutrition, particularly leading actors in Health, Agriculture, Education, Women Development, and municipalities implementing such programs as Family Health, Healthy Schools, Women's Training, and the Solidarity Network. Academic institutions and NGOs working with vulnerable populations will be implementing agents, particularly for investigations. Currently the President’s Technical Secretariat is mandated to coordinate the National Food Security Policy, and as such it will be strengthened in this process.

In spite of some national advancement in the hunger target of MDG1, the results of this Joint Programme may be affected by the international economic crisis and instability in fuel prices, resulting in increasing poverty levels due to higher costs of credit, transport and goods, and decreased employment and remittances. The joint programme itself is a response to this situation.

Politically, the 2009 electoral process in El Salvador may be accompanied by some social and political tension. This risk is minimized through the high credibility of UNCT, recognized as a joint UN decision making mechanism in the country, to which any State government has to relate as a member of the UN system.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy:

Outcome 1:
- Established FSN Regulatory Body
- Strategic FSN action plan formulated, being implemented nationally, locally.
- # officials, nationally, locally, adopt and implement FSN Action Plan.
- # institutions adopt and implement FSN Action Plan.
- # women organizations participate in FSN Action Plan design, implementation.
- # FSN programs, national, local, promoting gender equity.
- # Government institutions stronger in responding to FSN demands.
- # FSN trained officials.

Outcome 2:
- Integrated monitoring system, including gender analysis, operating nationally, locally.
- Updated FSN information available, particularly for children under 36 months.
- #, FSN observatories operating and guiding actions to solve problems related to children and gender inequity, nationally, locally
- # Institutions equipped for FSN.
- # Officials trained to record, process and analyze integrated information on health, agriculture, nutrition and education.
- FSN Forum operating in eastern region.
Outcome 3:

- Publications and publicity campaigns conducted on FSN topics
- Updated FSN information disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, in three municipalities.
- Three municipal FSN Action Plans prepared.
- # Women participating in formulation and implementation of municipal plans.
- # Women, community leaders, local leaders trained in topics related to the four pillars of FSN.
- # Small producers trained in agricultural, livestock and post harvest techniques.
- # families receiving food-for-work during the first year of the project.
- # productive and microenterprise projects started and operating in three municipalities.
- # Purchasing agreements between producer groups and industries.
- # Women participating in productive and microenterprise projects.
- Three health centers equipped to provide integrated health care in FSN.
- # Officials in health, education, agriculture and municipalities trained in management of FSN.
- # women receiving nutritional care.
- # Fertile-age, pregnant women receiving nutritional care.
- Availability /consumption levels of fortified and nutritionally improved foods in three municipalities.
- # Schools and homes consuming safe water and foods.
- # schools with adequate waste management and safe water.
- # Homes where males participate in domestic work and activities related to family meal preparation and nutrition.
- # Boys and girls under 36 months recuperated nutritionally.

Baseline indicators to measure impact will be obtained using participatory community assessments, food consumption surveys, anthropometric and biochemical nutritional evaluations; capacity building, through activity participation, in-depth individual and focus-group interviews; results, through project reports and activity evaluations.

VI. Institutional Arrangements and Management Plan:

The United Nations System in El Salvador is formed by 8 Resident Agencies. In light of the UN Reform, the UNCT began a joint programming process in 2005 resulting in the preparation of the UNDAF 2007-2011. This framework harmonizes and coordinates its work assigning priority to specific areas of interest, including Food Security and Nutrition. Cooperative efforts in this field are: the Adolescent Women Empowerment Interagency Program (PIEMA) 2003-2005 with the participation of FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP; the formulation of the Food Security and Nutrition Policy 2005, with FAO, WFP, INCAP/PAHO, UNICEF; three Height Censuses for First-Grade School Children, with INCAP/PAHO, WFP, UNICEF; interagency collaboration between UNICEF and INCAP/PAHO for the National Survey on Family Health (14); formulation of plans for National Nutrition and National Food Security by FAO, WFP, INCAP/PAHO; formulation of the National Plan to Fight Child Undernutrition, a regional initiative supported by WFP, PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, FAO.

The UN agencies participating in the joint programme are: PAHO/WHO, FAO, UNICEF and WFP. The key partners of the joint...
programme are the ministries of Health, Agriculture and Education, and the Presidential Technical Secretariat. They will implement joint programme activities, in coordination with other national institutions concerned with the development of Women, Children, Family, Municipal Affairs, Census, Professional Training, NGOs, municipalities, universities, private sector organizations, churches and civil society.

PAHO/WHO Strategic FSN objective for 2008-2012 is to improve nutrition, food safety and food security throughout the life cycle.

FAO specialized in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Rural Development, focusing in food security and nutrition

UNICEF mandate is to advocate for the protection and fulfilment of the rights of children and adolescents so they can reach their full potential.

WFP mandate is to watch over the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable groups during and post-emergencies.

Overall joint programme coordination will be the responsibility of PAHO/WHO. Indicative activities as outlined in Appendix A will be led/administered by the first Agency listed under each activity but implementation will be carried out jointly. Technical assistance will be provided by INCAP, since it is the PAHO/WHO specialized FSN agency for Central America.

The main national partners are the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Education. These Ministries will assume the responsibility for the implementation of the activities laid out in the joint programme.

A national steering committee will be established to supervise and provide strategic guidance in joint program implementation. The committee will be integrated by the Resident coordinator, Representatives in El Salvador of PAHO/WHO, FAO, UNICEF and WFP, high-level representatives from the ministries of Health, Education, and Agriculture, the Embassy of Spain in El Salvador, the Ministry of External Affairs, the academic sector, municipal mayors, and civil society.

PAHO/WHO will play a governing role in the implementation of the joint programme. A Management Coordination Unit will be established by PAHO to facilitate joint coordination and implementation. Its composition and functions will be developed in the joint programme document. The joint programme will use a “pass-through” fund management option, with UNDP as the administrative agent.

C. MDG-Related Indicators

Millennium Development Goal(s) Addressed by the Programme:
- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Millennium Development Goal Indicator(s) targeted by the Programme:
- 1. Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day
- 11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 13. Under-five mortality rate
- 14. Infant mortality rate

D. Formulation Advance

Formulation Advance requested? Yes

Amount:

A lead Agency who will manage these funds: WHO - World Health Organization

E. Resident Coordinator’s Undertakings

Commitments:
- The Concept Note has been reviewed by the national government and the UN Country Team.
- If approved by the MDG-F Steering Committee, the UN Participating Organizations undertake to submit a draft Joint Programme Document within eight weeks of notification.
- All UN Participating Organizations have or will sign the global Memorandum of Understanding with the Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office.