

INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST CANCER
Cancer Capacity Building Fund 2007
Final Report (web version only)

Section 1	
Country	Nicaragua
Project title	Strengthening Civil Society's Capacity to Fight against Tobacco in Nicaragua in an Appropriate and Effective Manner: Achieving Smoke-Free Schools
Project Officer	Zoyla Esmeralda Segura Guevara
Organization	Instituto CentroAmericano de la Salud – ICAS
Section 2 - Project Objectives	
<p>2.1. Compare accomplishments with goals established in the project. Whenever possible, describe the work accomplished in both quantitative and qualitative terms. If project goals have not been met, explain the reason for this, what steps have been taken to get the project back on schedule. (300 words)</p> <p>The project was able to meet the expected results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The capacity of ICAS and civil society, specifically of the National Committee for the Fight against Tobacco (NCFT), was greatly improved. ICAS was able to obtain additional resources from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (TFK) and the American Cancer Society (ACS) to intensify the anti-tobacco fight. One of ICAS staff members received a training organized by ACS to strengthen ICAS's capacity and an ACS University Seed Grant has been approved with the objective to develop a smoke-free policy at the Universidad Evangelica de Nicaragua. 2. An anti-tobacco campaign was implemented in 5 secondary schools (goal was 4), thereby greatly improving the capacity towards primary prevention in schools with a newly obtained capacity of 116 teachers (goal was ≥ 100) to implement anti-tobacco classes and increased knowledge among 3,995 students (goal was ≥ 2000 students) and ten student volunteers ready to implement activities in the second phase. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity building activities: The project obtained commitment from relevant stakeholders, such as Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), two Universities, and NCFT. Two workshops were organized for ICAS staff and 15 members of NCFT. The existing legal framework on tobacco control was compiled and elements of the legal framework were discussed in workshops with teachers and the NCFT. A forum debate "Smoke-Free Schools" was conducted with 60 students and teachers representing the 5 schools and which was highly interactive with lively debates between smoking and non-smoking students. 2. Primary prevention activities in schools: a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) study was implemented among students and teachers, which provided inputs for the anti-tobacco campaign (see annex). Teachers were trained. Students were educated. The project developed 	

a primary prevention school curriculum to be utilized in the second phase of the project.

2.2. Describe any changes that have been made or are anticipated in the project staff, work plan or methodology. (200 words)

The project activities were planned for a period of six months (July-December 2008), coinciding with an active school period and school holidays starting in December. The second KAP study (evaluation of the project) was planned in November. However, due to the municipal elections, the school holidays started early November; this change was announced just before the elections. We have planned therefore to realize the study in January 2009 when the new school year starts, as proposed to the UICC by email. In addition, the brochure consisting the existing legal framework will now be distributed early 2009 to further familiarize the teachers as well as NCFT members with the legal guidelines, rights and opportunities to sustain the anti-tobacco fight, complementing the earlier mentioned activities on legislation.

Due to the high acceptance of the project by the MoE authorities, and the identification of smoking as a serious problem within the student population, the MoE proposed to include a fifth school, increasing the number of schools to be intervened from four to five. Furthermore, due to the great interest in the project, ICAS was requested to include more students. Finally, the project benefitted 3,955 students in the five schools intervened (goal was 2,000 students in 4 schools).

Section 3 - Work carried out

3.1. Describe major activities of the project. (200 words)

Capacity building of ICAS, NCFT and teachers. ICAS and NCFT participated in workshops to increase their skills related to Advocacy and Smoke-Free Environments (see annex for presentations). To educate the teachers to make them ready to orient students, teachers were trained in: damage to health, prevention, myths and realities, peer pressure and legislation, using videos and through the reading and analysis of relevant information. Trainings were highly interactive; succeeded to arouse interest and motivate teachers; and were very well received by MoE delegates, school directors and teachers alike, who view with great concern the increase of tobacco consumption in students. Teachers requested more periodic trainings and inclusion of all students.

The prevention campaign consisted of talks, mobile cinema, discussions, leaflets, banners, murals and the forum debate. Students were informed about the impact of smoking on their personal life, their family and the socio-economic consequences in addition to providing them with elements to resist social pressures that lead to smoke-initiation. The cinema included videos showing how family and social environment influence smoking habits and the damage caused, not only to those smoking but also to others. These videos prompted much discussion. Each school was provided with materials for murals. Banners were produced and leaflets on myths and facts about smoking (see annex with educational leaflet and photos).

3.2. Describe the audience for the project, what kind of new or underserved population the project has reached. How did the audience react to the project? (200 words)

The audience consisted of: students, school staff (teachers, directors, administrative staff, guards), NCFT members and ICAS staff. It is worth mentioning the involvement of students and teachers who smoke or had smoked, and shared their experiences and explained the damage smoking is inflicting on them, reinforcing the importance of early prevention.

Smoking prevention is relatively new in Nicaragua. Students and school staff are a new population. The project managed to arouse their interest and we were explicitly asked to address more students and find ways to maintain activities in schools and other venues of interest to achieve a greater impact.

The project identified new groups of interest, such as universities. While these students are older, they still fall within the range of "youth". Our interest here is to establish smoke-free universities through an educational process concluding with the final certification by the MoH. The project has approached the MoH on the relevance of accreditation of educational institutions and to inventory the steps needed, since certification of these institutions is new in Nicaragua. This will be a relevant point to be taken up in the second project phase, taking into account the good relations ICAS has with the MoH and educational institutions.

3.3. Did the project trigger collaboration with other institutions, which ones? (200 words)

One of the key partnerships that made it possible to reach so many students and teachers was the collaboration with the MoE, who gave letters of recommendation and permission to implement activities in schools. It is worth mentioning the full support from the school directors, who arranged time for both teachers and students to participate in the KAP study, mobile cinema, talks, forums, etc.

Through the project ICAS was able to initiate lobby and advocacy work towards the MoH, awakening the rather passive department responsible for the certification of smoke-free environments.

It is important to acknowledge the collaboration with the institutional members of the CNFT, including Universidad Evangélica, Universidad Central and Universidad Politécnica, who facilitated logistical and technical support and conference rooms for the different trainings.

The strategic partnership between ICAS and CNFT improved greatly through the project. Furthermore, because of the project, CNFT increased its own activities and reach in the fight against tobacco. As mentioned, the anti-tobacco fight is relatively new and Nicaragua is just in its first steps to establish a sound base from where this fight can take off. In that sense the UICC project came at an opportune moment, reinforcing the first movements of the fight.

3.4. If the project was evaluated, describe how the evaluation was performed and by whom. (200 words)

As explained above it was not possible to implement the second KAP study measuring the results of the intervention, because of the earlier closure of the school year, due to the municipal elections. The second study will now be done at the start of the new school year. Nevertheless, we analyzed the results of the first KAP study. The most relevant results are:

- One in two students already experimented with smoking; of them 17% in the age of 14 to 15 years, 13% in the age of 12 to 13 and 3% even tried to smoke at the age of 7 or younger
- 18% had smoked at least one cigarette during the last 6 months (of them 36% were girls and 64% boys)
- The main reasons for experimenting were to feel part of the group and out of curiosity
- Of student who smoke 2% does this at home
- 26% of students manifested that one or both parents smoke

The consumption of tobacco is a serious problem in young people. Schools represent an excellent opportunity to address the issue and prevent smoking-initiation.

We annex the full report in Spanish as well as an English translation of the summary.

3.5. Indicate if there are any plans to continue the project after the grant period because of the success of the project and the interest it has generated. (200 words)

Taking into account the interest the project has generated, including among MoE authorities, and the benefits in the medium and long term, ICAS considers it highly beneficial and feasible to expand coverage to other schools and universities. We also think that primary prevention

should start at primary schools, and be extended to the next educational levels. Parents should be actively involved as it is evident that smoking starts at younger ages and in different environments including the family.

ICAS is making efforts with national and international actors, including UICC, to give continuity to and extend primary prevention activities at educational facilities, complemented with other actions, such as legislation. Based on lessons learnt, we propose the following objectives:

1. Provide schools and universities with tools and materials to support them to take measures to achieve smoke-free facilities and to prevent smoking initiation.
2. Advocacy campaign towards MoE to develop smoke-free policies in all public educational facilities.
3. Continue capacity building of civil society to promote the approval of the new tobacco control law and develop actions which contribute to controlling tobacco, based on solid arguments, effective tools and evidence of the impacts of effective approaches used in other Central American countries.

3.6. Describe any efforts that were made to publicize the results of the project. (200 words)

ICAS has made many efforts to publicize the project and promote the relevance of the prevention and control of tobacco. ICAS has used a variety of opportunities to this end: e.g. meetings with universities and the national authorities of education and health; civil society gatherings, meetings with donor cooperation in the country, such as embassies; exchange meetings organized by organizations fighting for tobacco control (TFK and ACS), meetings with members of the National Parliament and through publications and articles on the websites of the institution and the Latin American network CLACCTA (see annex). The results of the second KAP study evaluating the impact will also be widely disseminated.

In October 2008 ICAS organized in collaboration with TFK a workshop titled: "Comunicación y Políticas para el Control del Tabaquismo" to train members of the NCFT and other civil society organizations and universities to increase their capacity in lobby and advocacy against tobacco and for the approval of the new tobacco control law (see annex for agenda).

Section 5 – Narrative report

Please describe the way how conducting this project has strengthened the capacity of your organization. A description that includes how problems were dealt with will be more helpful to Cancer Capacity Building Fund Steering Committee than one that focuses exclusively on the project's successes. (memo field)

This project has greatly strengthened the technical capacity of ICAS to fight against tobacco. Although the institution had already quite some experience in the development and implementation of communication strategies, targeting different populations groups, the topic of prevention and control of smoking was relatively new to ICAS and the country. In earnest we can say that with this project, financed by UICC, the institution was able to build its capacity in this new area. We believe that the project has been implemented at an opportune moment, as it coincides with the introduction of a new law to the national parliament to control tobacco in Nicaragua. The project has also strengthened the civil society capacity and improved and increased its activities and reach through the trainings provided on advocacy and smoke-free environments and the collaborative efforts to implement the project. This was especially critical because the NCFT and its members, including ICAS, have just recently started the fight.

We can affirm that both ICAS as well as our project partners have been strengthened by:

- Acquisition of scientific knowledge on the problem of smoking in the country and learning about successful experiences developed in other countries in the fight against tobacco.
- An increase of knowledge on topics such as damage to health due to smoking, myths and realities, the existing legal framework and opportunities to fight tobacco
- Important matters related to smoke-free environments and secondhand smoke
- Knowledge related to lobby and advocacy and how each of us can apply this
- Increased capacity to implement lobby and advocacy work in the fight against tobacco.

Of all these issues, the legal framework attracted much attention as almost none of the different entities with which the project worked, had any knowledge regarding the existing legal framework and opportunities in the fight against tobacco.

The project aroused great interest in the different collaborating entities, including the Ministry of Education and the National Committee to Fight Tobacco. As a result of this interest and the efforts of the different partners, the project succeeded in preparing 116 teachers who are now able to contribute in their schools to prevent smoking initiation among students. In fact teachers are motivated to implement activities with students ranging from the development of murals, mobile cinemas, classes on tobacco use and its damages, to the writing of essays and papers on tobacco issues and to promote a smoke-free environment in the schools and actively prevent smoking initiation.

We also believe that the project obtained real commitment from the directors of the different schools to promote actively the prevention of smoking and stimulate the corresponding activities.

The KAP study allowed us to know more about the problems of students in relation to tobacco and about the influence of those factors that induce the consumption of cigarettes at an early age. This knowledge permitted us to refocus our actions and focus them on those key aspects which will contribute to the prevention of smoking. Similarly we analyzed and concluded that in projects of this nature the collaboration and involvement of various sectors and of organizations fighting tobacco is necessary to counteract this epidemic.

The project could count on the participation of students who do not smoke, but at the same time the project obtained the active participation of a group of young people who still smoke or had smoked and it was really interesting to see that they were willing to share their bad experiences with fellow students. On the other hand it was clear that they were quite ignorant about the damage of smoking to health, including secondhand smoke.

We believe that this project has made clear that school environments provide a great opportunity to work on primary prevention of smoking among adolescents and young people, also because it is increasingly clear that young people start smoking at younger ages, while there is enormous interest among students, teachers and educational authorities to get involved in primary prevention of smoking.

Please send in any leaflets, posters, pictures, educational publications, links to electronic resources you produced in the framework of the project.

- Annex 1. English translation of the summary of the first KAP study
- Annex 2. Spanish report of the first KAP study
- Annex 3. Power Point presentations used in the capacity building workshops
- Annex 4. Educational leaflet
- Annex 5. Photos of educational activities
- Annex 6. CLACCTA article
- Annex 7. Agenda of the workshop organized in collaboration with TFK