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Dialog Process on Chronic Renal Insufficiency
Facilitator's Summary
September 2, 2010

1. Background

Another dialog meeting, convened by the Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO) of the World Bank Group, was held in the town of Leon on September 2 to 12, 2010, with the attendance of Nicaragua Sugar Estates Limited (NSEL) and Asociación Chichigalpa por la Vida (ASOCHIVIDA), for the purpose of seeking alternative solutions to the Chronic Renal Insufficiency (CRI) problem. This time, Mr. Carlos Pellas attended the dialogue meeting in representation of NSEL.

This meeting was organized in conformity with the guidelines set forth in the Dialog Framework Agreement proposed by CAO on November 20, 2008, which NSEL and ASOCHIVIDA have abided by separately. As per point 6 of that Framework Agreement, the dialog meetings will be focused on, and limited to, the following:

a) Identifying and addressing the causes of CRI. The adherents agree to define jointly the criteria and principles that are required in order to carry out a study to identify the causes of CRI, whose findings should be transparent and reliable for all and provide feasible solutions.

- i) Expected outcomes: an agreement on the criteria and principles that will guide the study. An agreement to abide by the findings of the study and the alternative solutions to the problem.

b) Options for supporting local communities with a prevalence of CRI. Out of good will and with no legal obligation to do so, the adherents agree to seek ways to alleviate the situation of families that are affected by CRI, involving both local resources and State institutions.

- i) Expected Outcome: To alleviate the situation of families that are affected by CRI.

2. Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose for this dialogue meeting was to hear a presentation of findings based on a report of the Industrial Hygiene / Occupational Health Assessment conducted on “*Ingenio San Antonio*” (ISA) by the Boston University School of Public Health and agree on new opportunities to alleviate the situation of families being affected by CRI.

3. Progress Made

Point 6.a of the Framework Agreement: To identifying and address the causes for CRI.

Prior to this dialogue meeting, the Boston University team sent ASOCHIVIDA and NSEL a draft of the study and held bilateral meetings with their representatives. The aim of these meetings was to receive suggestions from dialogue participants to improve the wording of the

report and reduce the risk that its findings might be misinterpreted. On August 31, 2010, having received comments from ASOCHIVIDA and NSEL, the Boston University team completed the final draft of the report and published it on the CAO Web page (<http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/NSELBostonUniversityHealthAssessmentAugust312010.htm>).

During the dialogue meeting, the Boston University team related the activities that they carried out and presented the main conclusions of their study. In summary, the Industrial Hygiene / Occupational Health Assessment states: *“The participants of the dialogue table posed questions that focus on the work practices of ISA and we responded to these questions based on the current scientific information available. We have concluded that none of the current work practices or the chemicals used by ISA are generally accepted causes of CRI. This conclusion does not rule out the possibility that one or more of these agents might in fact cause CRI, but new scientific knowledge and insights will be necessary to establish whether any link actually exists. To develop this new knowledge, subsequent phases of our work will focus on gathering additional exposure and health data and investigating their possible connection to CRI both within ISA and in other areas of Western Nicaragua.”* The detailed conclusions can be seen in Chapter VII of the report.

The Boston University team also presented the Dialogue Table with four groups of recommendations on ISA work practices: Improve the Training Program; Improve Handling and Storage of Agrochemicals; Reduce the Risk of Heat Stress; and Enhance Recordkeeping to Improve Surveillance. According to the University, *“These recommendations are not made due to any connection between work practices at ISA with kidney damage, but rather to simply identify opportunities to improve the health and safety procedures at ISA in general.”* NSEL has said that it believes that all of the recommendations made are relevant, and that it will take action to implement them.

The University stated that the final draft of the report on the water samples taken at six locations around the facilities of *Ingenio San Antonio* is not available yet, and that it will be sent by e-mail to NSEL and ASOCHIVIDA to receive their suggestions to improve the wording in order to reduce the likelihood that its conclusions might be misinterpreted.

Finally, the Boston University explained that the following research activities will include taking blood samples of 1200 ISA workers, beginning a retrospective cohort study, urine tests in adolescents, medical visits, and broadening the scope of environmental sampling of soil and water.

In keeping with their commitment as set forth in the Dialog Framework Agreement, ASOCHIVIDA and NSEL have accepted the findings presented by the Boston University team and have reiterated their commitment to continue working jointly under the auspices of CAO to meet the goals of this dialogue process. CAO requested that any dissemination of the report findings should quote the words of the Boston University textually and avoid personal interpretations.

ASOCHIVIDA said that its primary motivation is to discover the causes of the disease and to keep more people from getting sick. Mr. Carlos Pellas agreed with ASOCHIVIDA and ratified NSEL’s willingness to continue providing the Boston University with any information it may require for the success of the next research phases that the team carries out both at Ingenio San Antonio and in other areas of the Nicaraguan Pacific coast.

Point 6.b of the Framework Agreement: Options for supporting local communities with a prevalence of CRI.

Mr. Carlos Pellas told ASOCHIVIDA that, beyond the findings of the Industrial Hygiene / Occupational Health Assessment conducted by the Boston University, NSEL is willing to continue working with ASOCHIVIDA to help the families suffering from CRI. For this purpose, ASOCHIVIDA presented a joint work agenda that was considered by Mr. Pellas. The following table indicates the requests made by ASOCHIVIDA, the answers given by Mr. Pellas and the implementation details agreed on subsequently with NSEL representatives.

ASOCHIVIDA Requests		NSEL Responses	Progress Made
Improving health care for ASOCHIVIDA members	Care and technology enhancements at the Chichigalpa health center.	Agreed. It has already given the order to study what the health center needs and make the appropriate improvements.	The offer will be made to MINSA in writing and, with its approval, a medical needs assessment will be conducted and a budget prepared to design the work that is required (Estimated duration: 3 months)
	Opening the <i>Ingenio San Antonio</i> hospital to ASOCHIVIDA members for emergencies.	It is not able to give a positive or negative answer. It will ask its team to study the feasibility of this proposal.	A legal study will determine whether it is possible to provide health care as patients to persons who have an on-going suit filed against the company. (Estimated duration: 1 month) If not possible, NSEL will consider alternatives to accommodate an area where ASOCHIVIDA members can receive exclusive treatment.
	Building a Hospital specializing in Nephrology and specialized care.	This is an idea that has been in preparation for some time. It has offered the Mayor's Office of Chichigalpa to donate one and a half blocks to build a hospital specializing in nephrology and specialized care, once MINSA approves the construction and agrees to assume its management.	Together with the Mayor, NSEL plans to ask MINSA's permission to build it, and receive its commitment to manage it once built, with a specific budget line. Funding for the building will be both public and private.
Increase the amounts allocated to bolster the initial credit fund of US\$ 50,000.00 dollars, following viable business plans approved by the microfinance foundation CEPRODEL, to generate jobs and income and thereby raise the standard of living of the members and their families.		Agreed. The microcredit amount will be raised to US\$ 100,000.00 (one hundred thousand US Dollars).	The transfer can be made as soon as ASOCHIVIDA requests it formally.
That the textiles factory project be made productive by combining it with a technical school to train members or their relatives who wish to learn a trade and even work in the factory once it reaches sufficient volume.		Agreed. The details need to be discussed with the NSEL team.	NSEL is willing to build the factory on a plot of land that it owns, so that construction can start as soon as possible. (Next week it will confirm whether it has a plot available.) A meeting between the technician hired by NSEL and Rogerio Cuadra will be needed soon to fine-tune project details, decide exactly how many

		machines will be needed for production and training purposes, and schedule the time–line for implementation.
Request productive farming projects for 2011, in order to provide answers to ASOCHIVIDA members who are in this business. The pertinent projects will be presented as appropriate.	Agreed. A specific fund can be set up for this type of project, and the “co–investment” model considered. The NSEL team will study the details of the Co–investment Program, in order to determine how many people might benefit and what the investment amount would be. (Estimated duration: next 15 days)	The NSEL team will study the details of the Co–investment Program, in order to determine how many people might benefit and what the investment amount would be. (Estimated duration: next 15 days)
A housing improvement program for ASOCHIVIDA members	Agreed. It will ask its team to study the available options.	ASOCHIVIDA will study the most urgent, special housing needs among its members. Meanwhile, NSEL will study alternatives with both ANF and other programs, such as “Un techo para mi país,” for example.
Request to add another 350 ASOCHIVIDA members to the basic food bonus (“ <i>beneficio de sustento alimenticio</i> ”).	Agreed. The same eligibility screening procedure should be followed as for those who are already receiving this bonus.	ASOCHIVIDA will provide NSEL with the dossiers of the appropriate persons for it to review.

Other Topics Addressed:

Both ASOCHIVIDA and NSEL feel that the dialogue process and the progress made should receive more publicity. In addition to trying to recur to more traditional media, news items will be posted on the ASOCHIVIDA web page and a number of “*El Pailero*” will be dedicated to the dialogue process.

4. Next Steps

CAO believes that the next steps in this dialogue process about the issues being discussed will be:

- During the next two weeks, the Boston University will send a draft report on its findings from the water samples taken at the *Ingenio San Antonio*, for NSEL and ASOCHIVIDA to make suggestions to improve its wording.
- ASOCHIVIDA and NSEL will move forward on the details for implementing the agenda presented by ASOCHIVIDA to Mr. Carlos Pellas at the dialogue meeting, in accordance with the table included above herein.
- The initial efforts will begin to disseminate broadly the outcomes of the dialogue process to date.

Juan Dumas
Dialog Facilitator