

Global Donor Platform for Rural Development



Mission Report: Nicaragua PRORURAL

(October 22, 2007)

Name: Richard Anson (working together with Araceli Jimenez, national facilitator in Nicaragua, and with Sonja Bartelt, representing the Secretariat).
Dates mission: October 1- 5, 2007
Country: Nicaragua
State of PBA/SWAp: Nicaragua/PRORURAL (involving 7 public sector institutions in the rural productive sector, including 1 quasi-public/private foundation) (Preparation and consensus process: May 2004 to August, 2005); Official “launch”: September 22, 2005, and now beginning the 3 rd year of implementation (with a new Government taking office on January 10, 2007, resulting in a transitional period, although the new Government has affirmed and demonstrated clear commitment to continue with PRORURAL, along with some “re-adjustments”, especially in relation to poverty interventions involving enhanced food security and access to rural finance).
Mission requested by whom and why? Our mission was carried out as part of the Government’s on-going request for the Platform to provide continuous facilitation services to support the implementation of PRORURAL (their SWAP for the rural productive sector), especially through supporting the implementation of the ownership, harmonization and alignment (OH&A) action plan (currently from July 2005 to December, 2007). More specifically, the new Government administration assumed office on January 10, 2007, and arranged to carry out their 5 th joint Government-donor review mission during the period October 1 - 5, 2007. See Attachment 1 for the agenda of the joint mission. Through the Platform’s facilitation team (especially the national facilitator), assistance has been provided to the planning of the joint mission. The Platform’s participation in the joint mission was discussed and agreed with the senior management of MAGFOR and the donor sector coordinator (Emilio Canda, representing the EU, and Maria Antonia Zelaya, coordinator of the working group on H&A, also representing SWISS Development Assistance), based on a draft mission TOR which was distributed several weeks prior to the joint mission, to help ensure a demand-driven approach to the Platform’s participation. See Attachment 2 for further details of the TOR.
Main objective of the visit: To accompany and facilitate the joint review mission of PRORURAL, with special attention on: (a) supporting the dialogue and 2008 Plan Operativo Annual (POA) processes to address priority themes which the new Government plans to give attention (e.g., poverty interventions in food security, greater attention to decentralization activities (especially the piloting of the H&A action plan, key institutional reforms of the public sector agencies in the rural productive sector (known as “SPAR”) (b) Discussing with some of the key actors the options for the Platform’s continued assistance to “accompanying” and further deepening Nicaragua’s OH&A action plan, beyond the current support period of July 2005 – December 2007). (also in the light of some of the initial feedback/views conveyed during the Platform’s recent retreat on the “future of country facilitation services”).
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Prior to the joint mission, I was requested by one of our key MAGFOR counterparts and the Platform’s national facilitator (Araceli Jimenez) to provide several inputs to the planning of the joint review mission (especially the mission agenda, and some inputs to the framework for the pilot decentralization H&A action plan).➤ During the joint mission, Araceli Jimenez and I participated: (i) in the mission field trip (to Juigalpa, Chontales Department, one of the pilot sites for the territorial OH&A action plan); (ii) joint mission



discussions (and in line with my agreed TOR), including support to the joint mission's "technical working team", which coordinated the mission activities (including inputs for the joint mission draft Aide Memoire).

- Organizing/facilitating an informal lunch meeting of key actors with the Platform team (Sonja, Richard and Araceli) to discuss lessons learned and possible options for the Platform's future support
- Following the mission, providing (through Araceli) inputs/advise for the preparation of the Joint Mission draft Aide Memoire

If you have participated in a major event, then please describe the dynamics of it.

I participated in the fifth joint Government and donor mission for PRORURAL (and the second one of the new Government). The joint mission plenary opening, working group and closing meetings were well attended, with the opening meeting involving 100+ persons: senior Govt. officials, including from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, President's Office, the 7 public sector agencies for the rural productive sector, known as "SPAR" (coordinated by MAGFOR); representatives from about 20 + donor agencies, and private sector private sector representatives. There were two groups of the joint mission which visited (on the second day) two different geographical rural regions to illustrate some diversity of experiences and perspectives from local government officials and farmer representatives (with a focus on the food security, decentralization of the planning/budgeting processes and the OH&A action plan.

Overall, there was a very positive "dynamic" in the tone and content throughout the joint mission, while addressing various important and challenging issues in the refocusing/readjustment of PRORURAL and the needed reforms in the sector's institutional "architecture". The most significant aspect of the mission was the continued strong ownership of and leadership in PRORURAL as demonstrated by the Minister of MAGFOR (Ariel Bucardo) and the Directors of the SPAR team. Minister Bucardo is also the head of the rural productive sector, and chair of the SPAR.

A disappointment of the mission was that the presentations generally were not followed by in-depth dialogue, and therefore, the extent and depth of consensus is unclear on some of the key issues.

Amongst the donors, there was also a positive dynamic in terms of communicating unified and clear messages. For example, sectoral representatives from the 4 common fund donors (+ World Bank) met prior to the start of the joint mission and worked out some agreed key messages. See [Attachment 3](#) for this agreed "common" position conveyed in the opening plenary session. It provides a good balance in affirming the new Government's commitment to continue PRORURAL, while also highlighting some of its main concerns and expectations on selected strategic issues (e.g., the delayed issuance of the PRORURAL progress report, some of the inconsistent information, the lack of analytical content in the PRORURAL progress report). Ideally, it would have been preferable if this common position would have been presented by the EU representative on behalf of the overall donor group, but there was not enough time to reach consensus by the larger donor group. Hence, the position statement was presented by the common fund donors.

Could you notice any frictions between actors? If yes, do they influence the progress of PBA/SWAp implication?

There were no apparent frictions between the GoN and donor actors during the mission, which reflects a continued relatively smooth transition by the new Government. However, the limited participation of private sector representatives during the joint mission reveals an on-going complex "dynamic" in identifying and involving "representative" private sector and civil society groups to engage in the PRORURAL dialogue and implementation process. It is generally agreed, especially by the donor group, that their more active involvement will enhance the progress of PRORURAL implementation and tangible results.

There continues to be good and improving working relations amongst donors, although there were two dynamics which were observed during the mission, which are worth noting. First, the EU was elected by the donor representatives to assume a new term of serving as the coordinator for the donor agencies for the rural productive sector. During the first day of the mission, the common fund (CF) donors (+ plus World Bank) made a formal



position statement regarding the progress of PRORURAL's implementation and the adequacy of the documentation prepared for the joint mission. Apparently, the EU representative also had intended to be a part of the common position statement, but at the last moment withdrew its participation in the common statement, since the CF donors and the EU were not able to reach full agreement on the content of the statement (and the EU perhaps realized that other donors should be a part of this process and common statement, but there was not enough time to reach a consensus by the entire donor group). Accordingly, this situation reflects an on-going transition of the EU assuming this coordinator role. By the end of the mission, the donors had met prior to the final wrap up meeting and were able to craft and reach consensus on a final statement. See [Attachment 4](#) for a sound, constructive and well balanced summary statement which was made by the EU representative. This reflects excellent progress by the EU in assuming their leadership role, and should build confidence for continued working together by the donors.

Second, a short presentation (on the last day of the joint mission) by one of the donor agencies on "lessons learned" from the PRORURAL processes and implementation experiences apparently triggered some "mixed" reactions on the part of some of the donor agency representatives. Apparently, the donor representative for a major multilateral agency, who is new to the PRORURAL scene, made some observations/suggestions in the plenary which did not recognize some of the on-going processes and efforts, especially involving the 3 working groups of the sub-roundtable for rural productive sector, and which some of the donors have worked hard to put into place. In retrospect, it would have been more effective if the presentation on lessons learned would have been a joint effort by the SPAR team and a small working group of donor representatives.

How do you assess the perception of local actors towards the work of the Platform?

Overall, based mostly verbal and some written feedback from Government officials and various donors based in Managua, the perception toward the Platform's role/facilitation services and interpersonal relations/trust continues to be very positive. There is especially positive feedback regarding the dedication and effectiveness of the local facilitator, Araceli Jimenez, and the trust that she has managed to secure with Minister Bucardo, other members of the SPAR Management team, and key counterparts (e.g., Julio Castillo and Claudia Tijerino). This confidence has been reflected in a strong demand for her active assistance on strategic, coordination and implementation issues involving PRORURAL, and especially the pilot initiatives which were recently launched to promote greater decentralization of the OH&A action plan as an integral part of PRORURAL's enhanced implementation.

Prior to the joint mission, Minister Bucardo and the donor group coordinator (for working group #2) sent separate and formal communications to the Platform's Secretariat to request the Platform to continue its assistance beyond the current closure date of December, 2007. These positive sentiments were also expressed strongly by SPAR Management and donor representatives who participated in the lunch meeting (on October 3, 2007). These various statements reflect their satisfaction with the Platform's assistance, as well as new challenges which warrant continued collaboration by the Platform, although refocusing its assistance to a more strategic agenda (e.g., promoting knowledge sharing and scaling up the PRORURAL experiences to other countries as a "global public good").

As discussed with Ms. Jimenez during our visit, it is important to ensure that the Platform continues to be perceived as a "neutral" entity which facilitates the work done by Government and donors (and not to assume a "staff" role for MAGFOR/SPAR and/or the Minister). The facilitator team also continues to make concerted efforts to forge a close working relationship with the Sub-roundtable's three working Groups, especially working group #2, which is the Platform's main "institutional counterpart". This working group is playing a key role in institutionalizing and sustaining the OH&A action plan, at the SPAR level, and now increasingly at the territorial level.

Could you identify any obstacles towards your work? (in ref. to the Nicaragua work)

There are no significant obstacles toward carrying out the Platform's facilitation work in Nicaragua, aside from the challenging nature of: (a) many of the implementation issues facing PRORURAL to secure tangible results on the ground, especially the on-going readjustments by the new Administration to refocus the poverty



interventions through the food security program, sustainable access to finance, as more information becomes available); and

(b) ensuring active participation by some of the major donors who currently are on the “margins” (e.g., USAID, IDB, Japan).

Please describe main challenges in implementing/proceeding with SWAp/PBA etc.

The main challenges in enhancing the implementation of PRORURAL (now going into its third year of implementation) involve the following key themes and priority actions:

(a) The policy directive from the Office of the Presidency for PRORURAL to give high priority in its strategic focus and expenditure allocations to adopt and implement proposed food security, rural finance programs, and “appropriate” emergency response to the adverse effects of Hurricane Felix (experienced in July, 2007) on selected rural areas/populations (especially in the Atlantic/Caribbean portion of Nicaragua). The donor agencies expressed concern on the need to maintain a “balanced” approach to the other PRORURAL components, and especially with on-going commitments at the territorial level. Accordingly, the donors are waiting from SPAR clear and positive progress in coming up with their proposed PRORURAL “readjustment” action plan (expected to be ready for discussion in about November 2007), and how this action plan will be reflected in the final version of the Operational Plan for 2008 (including budgetary allocations). It is important that PRORURAL funds are not “diverted” to respond to some of the emergency needs arising from the hurricane. Some of the donors believe that it may be more appropriate for the President’s office to prepare a separate “emergency” operation to address these needs.

(b) The outcome of the on-going actions by the Government to come up with a sound improved “institutional architecture” for the SPAR agencies (which is part of a country level institutional reform process currently underway), which would be consistent with appropriate arrangements to implement PRORURAL (including the intention to enhance the territorial and decentralization features). Given that SPAR Management are integral members of the Government’s institutional reform team, this should enhance the prospects of arriving at a sound arrangement which will be formally approved and implemented, with the needed political backing (an aspect which was missing during the last Government administration). An important aspect is to ensure that the existing mechanisms to implement the OH&A action plan (e.g., sub roundtable, the 3 working groups, the various consultation mechanisms with private sector and civil society) will be maintained, and hopefully further strengthened.

(c) The donors correctly expressed concern (ref. its final joint mission statement) about the capacity constraints of the SPAR agencies to undertake new and expanded initiatives (e.g., food security program (and its input subsidy program), rural finance, decentralization), while ensuring it implements effectively on-going activities. Hence it will be important for the “new institutional architecture” to be supported by appropriate actions to strengthen the various institutional capacities and mechanisms. Special attention needs to be given to strengthen PRORURAL’s monitoring and evaluation system (“SISEVA”). It should help the SPAR Management team and donors to focus their attention on key issues, based on an improved monitoring report. With regards to the OH&A action plan, the Platform can play an important role in providing appropriate capacity building support (subject to the decision and nature of further assistance by the Platform, beyond December, 2007).

(d) The ability/capacity of the donor working group to strengthen and consolidate working effectively with the SPAR agencies, especially under the leadership of the EU, as the official coordinator. This will help broaden the participation of other donors (beyond the 4 donors which are currently supporting the common fund of PRORURAL), and help ensure effective and substantive dialogue with the SPAR agencies.

Each of the above issues will be important strategic themes to be addressed in the forthcoming Mid-Term Review of PRORURAL (in early 2008). The Platform’s local facilitator, with backstopping support and advice from the international facilitator and the Platform’s Secretariat, can play an important role in addressing/supporting each of the above challenges.



Have you reached the overall objective of your mission? Please describe shortly referring to your stated objectives under paragraph 6. Yes, as already described above, each of the objectives of the mission was achieved, in line with the mission TOR (with further details reflected in the attachments). In summary:

Yes, as already described above, each of the objectives of the mission was achieved, in line with the mission TOR (with further details reflected in the attachments). In summary:

(a) PRORURAL Implementation Progress: the Government and donors carried out a relatively successful and well focused joint review mission of PRORURAL, although there were some concerns expressed by both SPAR management and donors (ref. Attachment 4 on the donor's joint final mission statement) on ways to improve the mission "methodology". The SPAR's joint mission closing statement, served as an initial Aide Memoire (see Attachment 5). While it highlighted key themes addressed during the joint mission, it was not very specific in terms of priority actions (partly due to inadequate time to prepare and agree on such a matrix). The expanded and more specific joint mission Aide Memoire currently is under preparation by a working group (SPAR with a donor representative), and it is expected that it will include a prioritized action plan matrix. The Platform's local facilitator is playing a key role in supporting this work (with email/telephone inputs from the international facilitator). During the joint mission the Platform's facilitation team worked closely together to support the above tasks, giving special attention to helping ensuring transparent communications and understandings, and which entailed different types of informal discussions with key actors.

(b) Support to the OH&A Action Plan: the Platform facilitation team was able to provide timely inputs/support to the joint mission's activities, especially in regards to addressing the relevant issues involving the OH&A action plan (e.g. agenda, joint mission working groups, joint mission technical secretariat, donor working group, and helping to "bridge" a better mutual understanding of concerns on the part of the key actors (which was done primarily on an informal basis), and taking a "demand" approach. Special efforts were also devoted by the Platform's Facilitation team to work closely with members of working group # 2, given their responsibility in overseeing the effective implementation and updating of the code of conduct, and the OH&A action plan;

(c) Reflection on the Platform's Past/Current/Future Assistance: the Platform team was able to organize an informal lunch meeting (on October 3) with key officials from MAGFOR (Julio Castillo, Claudia Tijerino), donors (Maria Antonia Zelaya, Tiina Huvio, Lasse Krantz, and Alain Peigne (from the EU)), and the Platform (Sonja Bartelt, R. Anson, A. Jimenez) to discuss the lessons learned and value-added from the Platform's assistance to the PRORURAL process and proposals/thoughts on the nature, focus and approach to future support by the Platform to the PRORURAL process. It is understood that the content of the discussion will provide inputs to the

Please describe advances and achievements since last visit.

Since the last visit in May, 2007, the major advances (and challenges) involving PRORURAL and the LH&A action plan are reflected above and in the attachments. In summary, the advances include:

(a) a smooth change and transition period of Government administration (in early January, 2007), which has continued to demonstrate clear actions and commitment to continue the implementation of PRORURAL, with some strategic "readjustments", and the deepening of the LH&A action plan. The pace of this transition period is also influenced and constrained by the Government's overall transition activities and period. The SPAR Management was able to prepare its draft note on the "new strategic directions" of PRORURAL (ref., focus on food security, rural finance), and include it in the semester report, although there was limited opportunity to engage in a substantive discussion during the joint mission.

(b) While the SPAR team prepared a Semester Progress Report of PRORURAL (January to June, 2007), there was uneven and partial completion of the key actions outlined in the final Aide Memoire of the joint mission in May, 2007. This semester report is one of the major outputs of the "SISEVA". Also, the content of the semester report tends to be more descriptive, and less analytical, and appears to contain information which needs to be validated and corrected. Future SISEVA reports need to focus on key output, result and outcome indicators, which can be effectively demanded and used by the SPAR management and donors,



- (c) continued significant improvements in the coordination of the SPAR agencies, working increasingly as a sector team, under the overall leadership of Minister Bucardo (and where many of the processes are being supported by the national facilitator);
- (d) significant steps toward preparing a “new institutional architecture” of the SPAR agencies, as part of a national level reform process (with a preliminary framework generally agreed, and to be completed by the end of October, 2007).
- (e) the launching of the pilot initiatives to decentralize the implementation of the OH&A action plan in two Departments (and to integrate this as part of their planning and budgetary processes), and with plans to “scale-up” these efforts to other Departments. This initiative also is complemented by a parallel survey/exercise supported by the Platform to assess the quality of services being provided by the SPAR agencies at the territory level. It will be important to coordinate closely these initiatives, and to integrate the relevant results in the preparation of the annual work and budgetary plans
- (f) the preparation of the annual operational plan for 2008, including initial budgetary allocations, although it was not ready for discussion during the joint mission (and one of the major disappointments of the mission).
- (g) the election of the donor working group of the EU as the new donor coordinator (“enlace”) to support the PRORURAL activities/agenda.

In each of the above achievements, the Platform’s local facilitator has made valuable contributions, working with and supporting the various teams.

Next steps: The next steps for the Platform’s facilitation role is to support:

- (a) PRORURAL Implementation/OH&A Action Plan: Support give high priority to supporting and facilitating the implementation of the agreed actions outlined in the final version of the joint mission Aide Memoire (in process), with a focus on the effective implementation of the OH&A action plan (in conjunction with working group No. 2 of the sub rountable). The national and international facilitators would continue to work as a single team in providing this facilitation support.
- (b) PRORURAL Coordination mechanisms: Support steps by the new Government to further strengthen the coordination role and effectiveness of the sub-roundtable for the rural productive sector (especially in helping to ensure a schedule of meetings in 2007 and 2008, clear agenda), its Executive Committee (which is chaired by one of the key counterparts of the Platform), and 3 working groups (especially working group No. 2), and other coordination mechanisms in support of an improved implementation of PRORURAL (with a focus on the OH&A action plan), and an expanded role of the private sector; the Aide Memoire presumably will include specific actions to guide these improvements;
- (c) Prioritize Support to end of Dec., 2007: Sharpen the priorities of the Platform’s support and implementation of the OH&A action plan, which currently will be completed by the end of December, 2007, taking into account priorities arising from the recent joint mission and the Platform’s available funds as already allocated to Nicaragua. This matter and priorities is being discussed with the Platform’s key counterparts in Managua (from MAGFOR and the donor working group). It will be helpful for the Platform Secretariat and the GTZ administrative office in Managua to provide the latest expenditure data to the local facilitator, to enable her to determine more precisely the available funds, as a basis for agreeing on expenditure priorities with the remaining period.
- (d) Cross-sharing with Honduras: as part of the Memo of Understanding between RUTA and the Platform, and in conjunction with RUTA, to resume in sharing the results and documentation of the recent joint mission with the Honduran national facilitator of the donor group (or Technical Secretary), given their previous cross-visits to Managua and desire to build on the Nicaragua experience in order to give greater impetus to their sub-sectoral sub-SWAPs



(e) Clarify Continued Support by the Platform: In response to the formal request for continued assistance by the Platform (ref. the letter from Minister Bucardo, and also the email from Maria Antonia Zelaya), it is recommended that the Platform's Secretariat provide a timely response to the Minister and the donor group (through Maria Antonia) on the intentions of the Platform in providing continued assistance and staying "engaged" with the Nicaragua PRORURAL process. It is understood that this response also will take into account the results of the retreat discussions held by the Platform's Steering Committee (at the end of September), the lunch discussion held on October 3 (ref. the "demand" from key actors), and the MOU between the Platform and RUTA to help "scale up" the experiences from PRORURAL to other Central American countries).

Final summary and personal impression Most of the response to this question is already stated in the above paragraphs. In summary, my main summary personal reflections include:

- 1) It is noteworthy that the Government, through Minister Bucardo and his colleagues from the other six SPAR agencies, are exhibiting strong commitment and leadership to implementing PRORURAL as a sector program, and increasingly seeking to work as a sectoral team. The on-going "new institutional architecture" for the rural productive sector is a BIG step forward, and seems to be reinforcing this sectoral approach. It will be important to ensure that the existing consultation and participation mechanisms (especially the sub roundtable and 3 working groups of the rural productive sector) will be fully incorporated in these adjustments;
- 2) There are strong political forces being directed by the President which are directing the emerging "readjustments" to PRORURAL especially the re-allocation of PRORURAL resources for food security (in the form of input subsidies/transfers), for rural finance, and for emergency response to the effects of Hurricane Felix, pose the risk of diluting on-going efforts in the other on-going PRORURAL components, and if not properly "balanced", resulting in a "collision course" with the donors. It will be important to ensure a transparent process of discussion between Government and the donors (especially working through the donor working group coordinated by the EU) in order to find the most appropriate balance, especially during the course of completing the POA/budgetary allocations for 2008. It will be important for the donor group to help ensure the participation of a senior representative from the President's office.
- 3) Future joint missions for PRORURAL and sub-roundtable meetings (especially where there are "large" groups) should endeavour to improve the structure for helping to ensure a deeper dialogue and consensus building on substantial issues, rather than following a tendency of having "one way" presentations, with little or no discussion. The continued strengthening of the working groups can play a key role in helping to assure a deeper dialogue on substantive issues. The Platform's local facilitator will be requested to give special attention to these aspects over the next two months.
- 4) The mid-term review (MTR) of PRORURAL indeed will play a very important role to help crystallize and consolidate the issues arising during the joint mission. It was agreed that the MTR should be carried out during early 2008. It will be important to help ensure sound TOR, and arrangements to carry out "independent" assessment, taking a more analytical approach. The Platform's local facilitator will be requested to provide needed support, especially on the processes for the MTR.
- 5) The assumption of the EU as the new donor coordinator for the rural productive sector provides an opportunity to broaden the donor "base" of "active" major donors in the PRORURAL process, together with the increasing supportive role of the World Bank, and apparent increased role of the IDB. There are two important donors which seem to be on the "sidelines" of PRORURAL, and supporting the H&A action plan --- USAID and Japan. The Platform's local facilitator can play an important role in providing administrative/information support to the EU, helping to maintain a close linkage with the on-going H&A action plan at the national level (which the EU is also playing a key coordinating role), and assuring the donors that the Platform is providing support to both the SPAR and donors. It is suggested that the Platform's Secretariat take up the matter of USAID's limited role with the Headquarter-based USAID representative (e.g., Susan Thompson, with whom I have raised the matter during the April 2005 annual meeting held in Brussels). A different approach will need to be taken with regards to Japan. To the extent the Platform is exploring collaboration with Japan, it would be



useful to pursue the PRORURAL case as a concrete example of enhanced participation in the H&A agenda.

(6) There is a need for the Platform's Secretariat, in consultation with the Platform's Steering Committee (and recently established Board of Directors), to crystallize the nature and focus of the Platform's future support to PRORURAL (after the end-December, 2007), taking into account the feedback from the Platform's retreat (at the end of September, 2007), the lunch discussion held in Managua on October 3, 2007, Maria Antonia Zelaya's email to Miriam Heidtmann (dated September, 2007), and the Minister's letter to the Platform requesting continued assistance beyond December, 2007. R. Anson has prepared a "debriefing note" as an input to the September retreat (dated September 23, 2007) which outlines some of the main options of the Platform's role, while recommending a more "strategic" focus which builds on "scaling-up and out" of the PRORURAL experiences to other Central American countries. This could involve using RUTA as a regional network, to give some operational meaning to the MOU between RUTA and the Platform, where RUTA can play a similar role as NEPAD, in being a "regional network/mechanism for scaling-up the relevant H&A lessons/agenda for the rural sector, as part of implementing the Platform's knowledge management and sharing pillar.

Lessons learned? (note: many of these points are consistent from previous monthly progress report and joint mission reports)

The recent note prepared by R. Anson as an input to the Platform's retreat in late September, 2007 includes four major lessons regarding the Platform's facilitation services in supporting the Nicaragua/PRORURAL processes, whereby effective and demand-driven facilitation requires (see Attachment 6 for further details):

- competency, commitment and a focus on a "genuine" facilitation (or serving) role
- it being evolving and responsive to priority needs of its key "clients"
- making available financial support on a demand-driven basis to catalyze strategic actions and fill "critical" gaps, as a complement to providing administrative AND "technical/advisory" support (with a strong focus on key processes)
- responding to opportunities for "scaling-up and out" to other similar countries (especially Honduras) some of the key lessons and principles arising from the Nicaragua pilot experiences (and this does not refer to using the same modality where the Platform finances directly a "facilitation team", but rather using a regional "network/entity" (e.g., RUTA in Central America) to accomplish this.

The mission report prepared by R. Anson following the May 2007 joint mission provides another set of key lessons learned which have been re-affirmed by the recent joint mission and also relevant to re-state. In summary, the main points include:

- (a) Implementing a PBA, such as PRORURAL, provides a vital vehicle for implementing and facilitating a sectoral LH&A action plan. Achieving and deepening trust among the key stakeholders is a vital element in making and sustaining tangible progress. Achieving good progress in ownership will help ensure smooth and good progress in the harmonization and alignment agenda.
- (b) A facilitation team comprised of a national and external facilitator has proven to be important to ensuring a demand-orientation to providing assistance. The institutionalization of the facilitation team's local counterparts (via Working Group # 2 of the sub-roundtable) will help ensure a demand-driven focus in the assistance being provided by the facilitator team.
- (c) The preparation and implementation of an annual sectoral work plan, underpinned by the periodic updating of a sound 3 year rolling expenditure plan, provides a powerful instrument for effecting important reforms in restructuring sectoral expenditures, but the preparation of such a sectoral plan requires a significant coordinated effort by the relevant agencies.
- (d) The effectiveness of donor agencies will be enhanced as it sharpens and coordinates the communication of key messages prior to and during important public meetings, especially where there is controversy and sensitivity.



- (e) Sectoral ministries (MAGFOR) need to persevere to ensure the Ministry of Finance remains actively engaged in the PBA-process, and to ensure adequate support through the budgetary processes (and throughout the year, and not just during the joint review missions).
- (f) It is vital to establish and strengthen the dialogue and coordination mechanisms for effective implementation of a LH&A action plan, as reflected in establishing and strengthening the three working groups for the rural productive sector roundtable.
- (g) Inviting representatives from other countries embarking on a SWAp process to an “active SWAp country” (like the visit from Honduras to Nicaragua/PRORURAL) provides an effective strategy for scaling-up lessons learned, where much of the scaling-up can be done by competent persons identified in the relevant countries (and in this case using RUTA to help foster and nourish this scaling-up process)