



DARWIN INITIATIVE



Pre-Project Funding Report

This report should be completed and submitted with a Stage 1 Darwin Application

Project Title	Capacity Building for Sustainable Management in the Nicaraguan Pacific Region (CBNPR)
Country(ies)	Nicaragua
Project Ref No. (if known)	
UK Organisation	The Society for Environmental Exploration/Frontier
Names / Titles of those who travelled to the host country	Matt Willson, Programme Manager (Operations) Elinor Breman, Development Assistant
Grant Value	£1790
Start and Finishing Dates	January – February 2004
Report Date	August 2004

1. Please provide a concise overview of the activities undertaken during the pre-project development visit. (Please also include relevant activities before and after, as appropriate). Please highlight those that were not planned.

The pre-project development visit consisted of meetings with local and regional NGOs as well as contacts in national universities in relation to the development of the project proposal: Capacity building for sustainable management in the Nicaraguan Pacific Region. Contacts were established nearly one year prior to the early 2004 visit, when the initial project idea was presented. Meetings for the pre-project visit were arranged by November 2003. Activities undertaken during the visit included:

1. Meetings with the University of Central America, Centre for Animal Diversity.
2. Meetings with MARENA (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources), national and regional managing body of protected areas in NW Nicaragua.
3. Meetings with the University of Leon (unplanned).
4. Meetings with Peace Corps volunteers in Pacific Northwest region.
5. Meetings in Estero Padre Ramos Protected Area with the local NGO, SELVA, and guided tour of the area
6. Meetings with the local NGO, LIDER, in Cosiguina and in Volcan Cosiguina Protected Area and guided tour of the area (several days/nights at Park headquarters).

2. Were any difficulties or setbacks encountered? If so, how did they impact on the intended achievements for the visit, and on the intended Darwin project proposal.

Though a variety of difficulties were encountered on the pre-project visit, these difficulties were overcome and have resulted in a stronger Stage 1 Darwin Initiative proposal. Setbacks encountered included:

1. Upon meeting, the main host country project partner at the University of Central America did not appear to be the relevant authority or contact for the development of a strong and successful project in the Pacific Northwest of Nicaragua. Though the University of Central America is a well-established institution, the University of Leon is more actively involved in contributing capacity and scientific assistance in managing natural resources in the Pacific NW. Therefore, a meeting was formalised with the University of Leon during the pre-project visit, which has now materialised into a Memorandum of Understanding between SEE/Frontier and the University of Leon.
2. Another stumbling block arose when it became evident that one of the proposed NGOs involved in the project development, FUNCOD, had dissolved and was uninterested in re-forming for the sake of the project. The University of Leon has since put in a proposal to manage Isla Juan Venado, formerly managed by FUNCOD.

3. Briefly explain how the pre-project funding has helped to confirm or change the planned project intervention – what difference did getting the grant make?

The pre-project funding has significantly strengthened the proposal from its original form. The visit itself allowed the creation of a dialogue between the Society for Environmental Exploration/Frontier

and the various stakeholders who would potentially participate in the CBNPR Project. Since this dialogue was established in January 2004, SEE/Frontier field staff and London headquarter representatives have worked closely with LIDER, SELVA and the University of Leon to begin designing an appropriate BTEC qualification for the Pacific Northwest of Nicaragua and to devise potential coastal and terrestrial monitoring schemes for threatened and endangered species in the region. The pre-project visit has eliminated at least one quarter of the planning phase of the CBNPR project and allowed a network of trust to be established and maintained. The great working relationship among all parties involved will help contribute to the success of project implementation.

4. Briefly describe the outcomes and conclusions arising from discussions with the host institution(s). What is the value of the project to the host institution(s) and what will their intended contributions be. Have any other partnerships evolved as a result of the pre-project grant?

From meetings during and after the pre-project visit, it has become evident that Nicaragua is often neglected in terms of donor funding. The majority of funding for Central America is granted to Costa Rica due to the rich infrastructure that exists there. The British Embassy has even closed down in Nicaragua due to lack of funds. However, Nicaragua is equally diverse and rich in biodiversity, with local communities and grassroots NGOs willing to support and uphold conservation initiatives. Host institutions are interested in species inventories of the areas in and around Cosiguina National Park, capacity building their rangers to sustainably manage the park's resources, and using the former to promote eco-tourism in the area. SEE's relationships with UNAN Leon and LIDER are now consolidated through separate Memorandums of Understanding, solidifying long-term commitments by all parties to conservation of the region. SEE/Frontier staff meet with Edmundo Torres of UNAN Leon on a monthly basis and LIDER's managing director, Bismark Caballero, on a monthly basis. Several meetings have been held with SELVA and MARENA representatives as well for direct contribution to the project proposal.

5. Conclusion and lessons learned from the Pre-Project Grant

Briefly highlight the main conclusions (positive and negative) gained from the pre-project grant. Please also include any suggestions you may have for improving the impact of this funding scheme.

The main conclusions from the pre-project grant include the following:

Nicaragua has tremendous potential for pragmatic conservation but very few funds are allocated to the country.

Host institutions are ready and willing to work with SEE/Frontier to develop and implement the CBNPR Project.

The University of Leon is the appropriate University for scientific related research in the Pacific Northwest of Nicaragua rather than the University of Central America.

MARENA co-manages the Cosiguina reserve and works in the same central office as LIDER, making the necessary paper work and contacting the appropriate contacts much easier.

LIDER and SELVA are very keen on structuring the BTEC to capacity build their rangers and improve park management.

Unfortunately, the University of Central America and FUNCOD will not be involved in the CBNPR.

However, the University of Leon will potentially manage Isla Juan Venado, formerly managed by FUNCOD.

The success or failure of a pre-project funding visit is potentially a strong indication of how the project itself will work. It's a great investment for the project itself since it eliminates a tremendous amount of planning for the project itself and allows trust between partners to build up over a period of time.

Signed: 
Name / Title: MATT WILLSON,
PROGRAMME MANAGER (OPERATIONS)

Date: 13 AUGUST 2004

Please restrict this report to no more than two pages in length and send the completed form to ECTF with your Stage 1 Application Form either via email to darwin-applications@ectf-ed.org.uk or by post to ECTF, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Edinburgh EH26 0PH.