

Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Vision and Mission

El Porvenir's (EP) vision for the next five years is of "Empowering rural Nicaraguans to achieve better health through comprehensive clean water projects." We will partner with rural Nicaraguans to develop and implement lasting projects and educational programs that increase access to clean water.

Historical context

Since 1989, EP has partnered with over 750 Nicaraguan communities to build over 1,300 water and sanitation projects.

Over the years, our approach has expanded, yet the focus has remained on access to clean and plentiful drinking water; especially for the women who collect and use the water most. In 1993, the first latrines were built which was crucial to protect the quality of water in wells and water systems. In 2003, EP began a more focused health education program to instill hygienic habits and ensure proper use of projects.

In 1998, EP introduced reforestation to aid in the protection of the water table and ensure plentiful water. In 2012 we expanded our reforestation program to address overall watershed protection. Our reforestation staff reviewed watersheds in five regions and selected one to begin restoration work. Our watersheds approach makes us stand out in the water and sanitation sector.

During our last Strategic Plan period, 2014 to 2018, EP saw tremendous growth and the addition of a field office in Waslala. EP now has 4 model watersheds¹ in progress and another 2 beginning. We expanded our work in schools and saw sanitation coverage in our areas in schools grow by 21%. We saw 94.4% of projects built in this period still in good or excellent condition three years after construction. EP got more involved at the national level with the Nicaraguan Water and Sanitation Network (RASNIC) and helped move forward the national agenda for sharing best practices and working smarter.

Our projects have always included a self-help labor component to ensure local commitment; in 2009, EP secured municipal governments' commitment to contribute 10-15% of the project cost. The next year, communities began to contribute 5-15% in financing along with their labor. These contributions ensure that the different stakeholders have a stake in the project and help to keep it sustainable.

EP is headquartered in Managua, Nicaragua and currently works in the municipalities of Ciudad Darío, Terrabona, Camoapa, San Lorenzo, El Sauce and Waslala; in total, those municipalities have a rural population of 145,945 people across 500 communities. All but one in-country staff are Nicaraguan.

Current context

Nicaragua is experiencing a somewhat complicated political climate. Despite this, EP has managed to continue work with only occasional slowdowns. We cannot easily forecast the next 5 years in this situation, but we expect to continue our work and grow slowly. We expect slowdowns in municipal and

¹ A model watershed is developed with the intent to show nearby communities what can be done to protect their watersheds in their communities. This will help convince them of the benefits of the watersheds approach.

community contributions during this difficult time, so we may need more help from our donors to meet these ambitious goals.

Guiding Principles and Values

El Porvenir believes that all projects should be the following:

- Community driven
 - All projects start with community leadership, when community members request our support. This ensures sustainability: a community that needs a project is likely to maintain it. The community leadership participates in training and is encouraged to include women.
- Reaches the last mile:
 - We work with every community that requests our help, no matter how remote, in the municipalities where we work.
- High quality
 - Projects are implemented with high quality standards from project construction to water cleanliness.
- Sustainable
 - Our work lasts over time: technology is affordable and locally accessible, and communities have local know-how to do repairs. Several other principles, such as high quality, also contribute to sustainability.
- Holistic
 - Our program areas complement one another: the watersheds program works to increase water flow in water projects while the hygiene education program maximizes health benefits from water and sanitation programs.
- Respectful of human rights
 - Access to water and sanitation are basic human rights recognized by the United Nations since 2010. El Porvenir strives to respect human rights by meeting the needs of all people without concern for ability level, race, religion, political stance, or gender. We believe in inclusive projects and promote female leadership.

El Porvenir is a learning organization. Although we have a highly experienced team, there is always more to learn. We adapt our methods based on our own experiences and the best practices of others.

What we do and how we do it

EP currently works in six Nicaraguan municipalities in rural communities defined by populations of 1,000 or less, but at least 5 houses or more.

Build Access

EP helps communities build or rehabilitate community water systems and household sanitation systems.

We consider our work in a municipality to be done when 95% of households have access to water within 500 meters of their home, and when 95% of households have access to dignified sanitation in their home or yard. We work towards both goals in schools and health posts as well, but our high-level focus is on the households and communities. From 2019 to 2023, our goal is to increase coverage of both water and sanitation in households by 12 percentage points in each of our municipalities and to complete work in water in at least two municipalities. We support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goal #6 that relates to water, sanitation, hygiene, and watersheds.

We are concerned with the idea of prematurely closing regions or programs, for example water in Sauce. In order to proceed with confidence that we are ready to close the water program in a region, staff has estimated how many piped water systems with chlorination would be needed. Some of this is beyond our control, but given that Sauce, as an example, has more wells than taps at this point, we will use that we use this as an indicator to plan closing the water program in each region. We estimate that within this five-year period we can close the water program in at least two regions.

Clean water and systems that work

EP supports communities to maintain their facilities through the formation and support of Community Water and Sanitation Committees (CAPS in Spanish). EP educators and promoters help form and train CAPS, providing intensive support for at least two years after the construction of their water and/or sanitation project. We promote hygiene and teach people how to avoid contaminating water and to protect the environment. EP staff monitors communities at least twice a year for 5 years after the construction. El Porvenir will provide short term technical assistance to a community when the CAPS requests our assistance to bring their system up to standards.

Our hygiene work is done when a community has the ability to provide its residents clean water as shown by:

1. The water taken from the water delivery point (a well or a tap) passes a water test 75% of the time. Currently, the water passes 61.6% of the time (2018 data to date).
2. The water and sanitation projects in communities are still in good or excellent condition 5 years after the project completion date at least 93% of the time. Currently, 88% of the projects built in the last five years are in good or excellent condition.

The long-term impact of this work will be measured by the number of communities “graduating”² from the education program.

Improving water supplies

EP works with communities to improve the quantity and quality of water in a region through activities that affect the flow of water in micro watersheds. We set up a model watershed in each municipality so that other communities and watersheds can see the benefits of using soil and water conservation techniques including terracing and tree planting. In the longer term, communities will see increased water flows and crop yields.

We measure our progress in this program area by the number of acres (or manzanas in Nicaragua) that enroll for watersheds protection and/or conservation. In 2018, we had 194 manzanas enrolled. Our goal for the next five years is to reach 1,100 manzanas. The long-term impact of this work will be measured by an increase in stream flows, increase in canopy cover and increase in grasslands coverage.

² By graduating, we mean that at least 80% of the families in the community have: clean yards/latrines, potable water (i.e. chlorinating or home filter), evidence that the family is washing their hands, and paying their water fees.

New directions and tactics for 2019-2023:

- Improve our educational outreach and behavior change:
 - Putting in a tap or a toilet is not enough. Health benefits multiply substantially when people learn to wash their hands as well. We will look at new strategies and tactics such as:
 - Include menstrual hygiene training
 - Text messages, television, national radio and/or social media to improve messaging, especially as related to water quality. These are to be used in our campaigns.
 - Establish municipal and national alliances to promote healthy and environmentally friendly behaviors (through Nicaraguan public health campaigns)
- Increase women's involvement
 - Women's participation increases the effectiveness of community management and supports the sustainability of our work. Therefore, we will:
 - Encourage women to create social water and sanitation enterprises to help EP reach more people.
 - Encourage women to take a greater role in the community management of the projects
- Expand our work to a new region
 - As our work in some geographical areas comes to a close in some program segments, especially water, we have an opportunity to use that budget formerly assigned to water there to a new region.

We also see these upcoming changes in our context:

- We are preparing for increasing demand for toilets rather than latrines, similar to how demand has moved from wells to taps in the last 10 years.
- We will include health posts³ in water and sanitation project implementation when developing projects where they are located to promote better health for all.

³ Puestos de salud in Spanish. Health posts are where community members go locally (usually within 3-5km) for medical attention in the rural areas. Sometimes they are staffed only 1/week though.