Overview

Since 2002, Project Concern International, a Global Communities Partner (PCI) has implemented school feeding programs in Nicaragua with funding from USDA’s Global Food for Education and USDA’s McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition programs. In 2017, PCI’s McGovern-Dole project, called MESA (Mejor Educación y Salud), began its second phase of programming, and continues to be implemented together with Nicaragua’s Ministry of Education (MINED), PCI’s local partner Centro de Derechos Humanos Ciudadanos Autónomicos (CEDEHCA), and PCI’s local literacy consultant group, Libros para Niños (LPN). Over the life of the project, MESA II will provide 4,340 metric tons (MT) of USDA-donated commodities – CSB+, rice, beans, wheat flour, vegetable oil – for daily school meals, benefitting 79,400 students from 1,115 schools (988 primary schools and 127 preschools) in 11 municipalities in the departments of Jinotega and the Southern Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS).

“We cook the school meals with commitment and love for our children; to allow them to learn better; because an empty stomach won’t allow letters to enter the brain.”
– Ricardo López Báez, father of children who attend Rubén Darío School, RACCS

Objectives & Key Activities

- Improved literacy of school-aged children by distributing school supplies and materials (i.e., teacher pedagogical kits); promoting students’ culture of reading and provide students with storybooks and reading progress cards; providing books for school reading corners, communities, and homes; training first through third grade teachers on the “Leer una aventura fantástico” literacy promotion strategy; strengthening capacity of PTAs and community leaders with activities to promote reading at home; establishing mini-libraries and classroom reading corners; and providing daily, nutritious school meals to students.

- Increased use of health, nutrition, and dietary practices by establishing school gardens; rehabilitating/constructing school infrastructure (i.e., handwashing stations, latrines); training school committees on infrastructure maintenance; distributing deworming medication; strengthening capacity of school feeding committees and cooks on safe preparation and storage practices; supporting health volunteers in promoting health messaging; equipping schools with tools to self-monitor school cleanliness and hygiene.

- Sustained impact and transition to a national school feeding program by strengthening capacity of MINED and schools to locally procure staples and fresh produce for school meals; supporting operationalization of the National School Feeding Program, whereby the MINED provides funds for procuring and distributing food to schools in line with MESA II’s commodity transition plan; empowering schools, communities, and local government to gradually take ownership of key responsibilities; linking local small-scale farmers with schools to supply fresh produce; establishing Women Empowered savings and loan groups; measuring schools’ sustainability readiness; and facilitating community action planning for sustainability.