

Executive Summary

Final Independent Evaluation

Brooke-OIKOS Pilot Project in Nicaragua

2013-2017

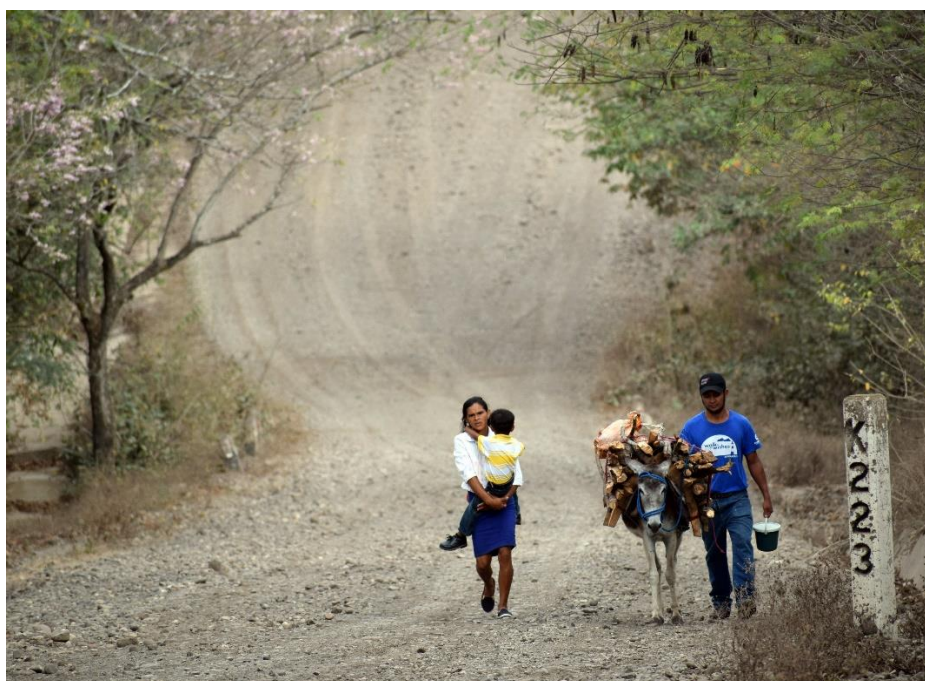


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Executive Summary

The Brooke/OIKOS pilot project in Nicaragua ran from April 2013 to March 2017. The main elements of the project were community engagement (CE), giving talks to owners about equine health and well-being (e.g. feeding, watering, shelter), veterinary training for Local Service Providers (LSPs) and 'agrovets', and advocacy work which was introduced in 2015.

All development projects have strengths and weaknesses. The greatest successes of this project are as follows: At the **community level**, the project has improved the technical knowledge of around 40 LSPs and 30 agrovets, and has improved the animal welfare of 2100 horses in three departments of Nicaragua. If the data is correct then 830 owners have received training in animal welfare. These figures for coverage and uptake¹ are taken from Brooke datasheets.

At the **institutional level**, Brooke has begun work in a new country, has gained experience, and has gained legal status with the government. These are no small achievements in a new country. Brooke has carried out some successful advocacy which should bear fruit in the future. Brooke has contributed to the detailed regulations of a key national law, has achieved significant media coverage and has made progress, encouraging national universities to include equine welfare in their teaching curriculum.

Areas of improvement for the project revolved around the planning and management. The planning of the project was insufficiently robust in various aspects. Brooke did not make a single plan for four years, but re-planned the project three times. The objectives changed from one year to the next (there are major differences in figures given in some of the different versions of the logframes). There does not seem to be evidence that the 2012 Scoping Study resulted in a logical portfolio of communities.

Overall assessment of the project against the evaluation criteria

The evaluators assessed the project against internationally recognised criteria from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) as per the Terms of Reference (ToR). **It was found that overall the project 'did not consistently meet expectations'**. In the opinion of many respondents the number of beneficiaries was low and the cost of the project was substantial.

The OECD-DAC criteria uses seven blocks to assess a project. These are: Validity of Design, Relevance and Appropriateness, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness of Management set up, Effectiveness, Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact. Of these seven blocks of enquiry, for the Brooke Nicaragua project, it was found that:

1. Validity of Design was rated 2: 'did not consistently meet expectations'.
2. Relevance and Appropriateness was rated 2: 'did not consistently meet expectations'.
3. Coherence was rated 4: 'Consistently met expectations and the quality of work was fairly good'.
4. Efficiency was rated 1: 'consistently below expectations'.
5. Effectiveness of Management set up was rated 2: 'did not consistently meet expectations'.
6. Effectiveness was rated 2: 'did not consistently meet expectations'.
7. Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact was rated 3: 'met expectations and the quality of work was acceptable'.

Validity of Design

¹ Coverage is the number of equines who have access to the services that Brooke provides. Uptake is the number of direct beneficiaries, i.e. the number of equines who use services.

Speaking with key stakeholders such as universities, institutes and town halls, there were strong statements of support for the work of Brooke and the objectives of the project. However, many respondents are of the opinion that the quality of the community engagement (CE) could have been better. There was an original methodology of community visits but this was repeated over and over without sufficient change or monitoring. The methodology became stale and the interest of the equine owner beneficiaries lessened.

Brooke did not collaborate sufficiently with other agencies, especially at the community level. This pattern began early on, and thus set a pattern for the rest of the period.

Relevance and Appropriateness

The level of satisfaction of people with whom we were able to speak is high. The owner-beneficiaries express their gratitude to the project. This should be contrasted however with the low number of equines reached by the project over the four-year period.

Coherence

The project is coherent with the most relevant government policies. It is in line with legislation, specifically the Law 747 which includes clauses on equine welfare. It is also coherent with government projects, for example from the Ministry of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy (MEFCCA). Brooke have some short videos showing support for the project from the governing party, and from other stakeholders in national and local government.

Efficiency

Brooke have invested £903,704 in Nicaragua over the four-year period. The majority of respondents believe that the project could have been more efficient in the use of the resources. Some examples found by the consultants of the poor efficiency (some of which were tackled during the project) are:

- The original methodology where two staff members attended each community together
- The choice of communities with large distances between them. Staff travelled a long time between communities but were sometimes only met by a disappointingly small number of people waiting for the meeting. This was stated both in visit reports and by current staff.
- Training events were held, but there was little noticeable change in practice afterwards.
- A low number of communities attended (14) and low number of beneficiaries reached for the money spent over a four-year period.

Effectiveness of Management set up

Overall many of the respondents said that the management of the project until mid-2016 could have been better, for various reasons. First it may not have been the best approach to try to manage the Nicaragua project at a distance from London for so long. This may have been a necessary approach for the first year but after that more responsibility should have been passed to the Managua office.

Secondly there were significant management difficulties with the Project Director between 2013 and mid 2016 when he left the project. There were staff tensions, a lack of motivation for changing the methodology, a lack of innovation, and concerns re the quality of data and reporting.

The hosting arrangement with OIKOS achieved the requirements negotiated between the two organisations. However, it did not need to have lasted for four years. It impeded Brooke's advocacy work and the establishment of the Brooke reputation in the country.

Effectiveness

Looking at quantitative data, draft SEBWAT data is available which gives information on animal welfare. To summarise a complex data pool in two sentences, it appears as if the project has achieved 'slightly

improved, or *'improved'* status in rural and urban areas in Nicaragua. On the other hand, many of the measurements (parameters) do not show any statistically verifiable change, and some have gone down.

Looking at qualitative data the evaluators found that few people involved with the project would state that the projects objectives have been achieved. No respondents could easily lay their hands on reliable concise information that proved that the objectives have been met. The evidence base of the project is weak and there are some discrepancies in data and figures. One respondent summarised it as follows "*Yes the project met the targets, but the original design was to only work in 14 communities. So, in four years work we have worked successfully in that small number of communities*".

Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact

Are the results of the intervention likely to be durable? At a **community level**, yes, we are confident that the majority of the owners who have attended the talks with Brooke staff will remember what they have learnt, so this will benefit the equines for some years to come. But we do not see sustainable *structures* in the communities that would keep alive the project objectives in the future. One respondent said "*We failed to set up a network of community leaders who would promote the ethics of Brooke in the future*".

At a **national level**, (in terms of influencing government, or institutions such as the universities) if the Brooke project were to close today probably very little impact would have been achieved. However, the progress made getting equine health and welfare onto the agenda of universities is very valuable. If this can be *continued and progressed* in the next few years, it will be a major sustainable benefit to the country and to all the animals

Conclusions

The main conclusions of the evaluation are:

- That Brooke have successfully helped a number of equines and their owner-beneficiaries over the four years.
- Preliminary SEBWAT data showed a small improvement in animal welfare.
- However, the scope of the project was unambitious, and more families could have been reached with a budget of £903,704 over a four-year period.
- The crude cost analysis gather shows that the project cost an average of £114 per animal reached. To put that in context, in Nicaragua you can buy a healthy working horse for £130, and a farm labourer earns around £92 a month.

Evidence gathered shows that the quality of management was a determinant factor for the low coverage and uptake. The project begun with a certain methodology in a certain number of communities but was uninspired or unable to achieve project innovations or changes later. Over time it seems as if the same approach in the same communities became tired and gave weaker results. The advocacy component however has been more successful. In 2016/17, the advocacy element had four objectives, of which two and half were achieved.

Lessons Learned

Some examples of lessons learned are as follows:

- It is important to invest time in building good relations with municipalities
- The importance of considering carefully when and if, ever, to *give away* goods and services.
- The value of media work to put pro-equine welfare messages to a national audience.

The team in Managua are also considering some future initiatives, such as working with digital providers of e-learning, but these have not started to bear fruit yet.

Methodology and Limitations to the methodology

The methodology encompassed a range of methods including desk review of documents provided beforehand, review of reports, forms, videos, photos and documents in Managua, one-to-one interviews, focus groups, small group interviews, direct observation, crude cost-benefit analysis, and discussion based on the draft report. The use of these methods ensured triangulation of the evidence collected.

Constraints included the following – insufficient time available to the evaluators, problematic period chosen for the evaluation, logistical support not available as previously agreed, variable quality of documentation. Recommendations to improve future evaluations are given at the end of the document.

Recommendations

The report includes 40 detailed recommendations, to be considered both by Brooke UK and by Brooke in Nicaragua, around the following areas:

1. **Strategy** – senior management to reflect on share understanding of Brooke's beneficiaries, consider direct funding of local partners, give further consideration to sustainability of projects, reflect on bringing livelihoods aspects into the project, develop partnership with organisations working on other aspects of animal health, consider investing in developing a new course on care of equine for vets and paravets;
2. **Management** – staff to improve management skills, invest in project cycle management, devolve more decision making power to Nicaraguan project manager, transition manager to learn Spanish;
3. **Efficiency** – reduce the geographical area of work, rethink Community Engagement approach;
4. **Planning and Design** – project design to put stronger focus on choice of communities to work in, next project to have a set timeframe and umbrella budget, set up useful but no onerous data collection system in place from start of the project
5. **Future Brooke Country Start-Ups/Pilot Projects** – avoid managing country project from London, pilot project should be extended for long periods and instead should move on either closing down or developing a full-fledged project, quality of induction is key when manager recruited has no prior experience in animal welfare, improve quality of needs assessments;
6. **Advocacy and partnerships** – continue investing in advocacy, urgently increase collaboration with local and national government, look for partnership opportunities to pursue externally funded projects, consider ways to continue working with Universities to incorporate equine health I curricula and experiment online training;
7. **Owner Beneficiary** – consider increasing emphasis on poorest communities, increase number of agrovets and LSPs reached;
8. **Community Engagement** – review CE approach, work with existing community leaders, reach common agreement on training, conduct assessment of knowledge as baseline before training, improved design of training approach and timescale, consider training certification;
9. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – enquire SEBWAT indicators, simplify M&E, staff-up Managua team, adapt M&E if working with partners, better time evaluation, improve quality of monitoring data as input to evaluation;
10. **Technical support** – promote south-south