

# Report on the 2020 Reading Campaign: “Let’s read, reading is fun”

## 11th Edition



Committed to education promoting reading:” Let’s read, reading is fun”

WPF

General report on Reading Campaign activities 2020

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## Table of Contents

<b><i>I- The 2020 Campaign</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>II- Reading promotion</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>III – The acquisition and distribution of books for children, youth and adults acquired with the WPF donation</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Assessments, perceptions of users, teachers and promoters about the Reading and the new books</b>	<b>7</b>
<b><i>IV – The course “Improving the teaching of reading”</i></b>	<b>10</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Course Assessments</b>	<b>14</b>
CONTENT	14
GENERAL ASPECTS	15
<b><i>V Miscellaneous Activities</i></b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Stories recorded for radio</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Scholarships</b>	<b>17</b>
<b><i>VI -Conclusions: accomplishments obtained and proposals</i></b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Points about a potential work plan:</b>	<b>19</b>
<b><i>IV- Annexes</i></b>	<b>19</b>

## I- The 2020 Campaign

In 2020 the eleventh edition of the National Reading Campaign: “**Let’s read, reading is fun**” was held. This year the impact of the COVID pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota were negative for children and their living conditions. After the pandemic began, many children were taken out of the public school system, out of fear of their families that they might be vectors of infection. Unfortunately, the government did not offer consistent and lasting alternative programs for children and youth, which is why severe setbacks can be expected in the learning of most students coming from homes in poverty.

ETA and IOTA especially affected the Caribbean region, in this region the impact of COVID on education was greater because many schools were destroyed and others were used as places of refuge, which is why classes ended abruptly. But those two hurricanes also hit municipalities, communities and families in the rest of the country, above all in the Northern and Pacific zones. Many of these municipalities are territories where participating organizations in the campaign hold their different programs, which is why in the last quarter of the year the effort for the promotion of reading was negatively impacted.

In these eleven years of work to improve comprehensive reading, in spite of the difficulties encountered, the educational community belonging to the network of the Campaign maintained and increased their commitment to contribute to improving the future of children in homes with poverty. Organizations that participated in the work of the campaign in 2020 were: Asociación Padre Fabretto, Asociación Nicaragua Lee, Amcham, Asociación Familia Padre Fabretto, CESESMA, CINADE, Cuculmeca, Fe y Alegría, Fundación Uno, Fundación Terra, Grupo Pellas, Libros para Niños, PCI Nicaragua, Promotora Cultural Chinandega, Rayo de Sol, Loto, Semillas de Progreso y Save the Children.

Special support for the campaign, offering several resources and technical assistance were Winds of Peace Foundation, that donated \$35,000 to purchase literature for children and adults; the education committee of AMCHAM, PCI that financed the first course; Save the Children, COMUNICA, LOTO who financed two videos of the second course; Fundación UNO and Fundación Terra who contributed to the second course, Grupo Pellas that donated US\$3,000 and the Central American University (UCA) through Cultural Coordination and the Communications Department.

## II- Reading promotion

The purpose of the campaign that has been implemented since 2010 has been:

*Involve communities, schools – teachers, principals, civil society and businesses, in supporting efforts to improve the reading and writing skills of first grade students.*

With pride it can be said that in the midst of the pandemic, we expanded coverage serving youth and children from higher grades. Also, support was provided to homes and communities with whose participation organization and foundation members in the campaign made special efforts to make the maximum use of the donations of literature, and provided recreation and reflection opportunities around different readings. Providing continuity to an effort begun at the end of 2019, in June the platform **Let's Read** was inaugurated to do online training through cell phones to teachers in the first years of grade school.

The activities held in 2020 were the following:

- Expand the promotion of reading, distributing more and better books and multiplying the reading circles and clubs with students in schools as well as in community spaces. The books were acquired thanks to the support of the WPF.
- Strengthen the habit of reading among teachers, organizing more reading circles in order that they might in this way motivate children to read. These books were bought with funds from WPF.
- Inaugurate the course on *“How to improve the teaching of reading”* in which 1,025 teachers and educators registered, with financing of PCI, volunteer work and collaboration with COMUNICA.
- Finalize the preparation and filming of a second course on *“A model for improving the quality of teaching: the importance of planning, systematically evaluating learning and accompanying in the back of the classroom.”* This course was done with the human and financial support of LOTO, with also a very generous donation from Grupo Pellas with which two videos were recorded, and contributions from Fundación TERRA and Fundación UNO. Like in the first course there was a big contribution from the members of the campaign and in addition an important collaboration with COMUNICA.
- Create audios of children's stories with the support of Libros para Niños and also audios of stories to disseminate by radio for youth and adults. These later ones were recorded with the collaboration of the UCA and were distributed among the members organizations of the campaign, particularly AMCHAM and the Fundación Pantaleón, whose officials Lorena Zamora and Ana Lovo, respectively, saw the possibility that they be used in radio programs on different local radio stations.

### III – The acquisition and distribution of books for children, youth and adults acquired with the WPF donation

The objective of the Project presented to WPF in 2020 was to strengthen the work strategies for promoting reading in schools, community spaces and networks prioritizing the work of having teachers and secondary students fall in love with reading, while the work with children was maintained inside and outside of the schools. Also, we sought to expand the promotion of reading in communities where the campaign works, given the scant attendance in schools due to the pandemic.

The following indicators were established in the Project: the **creation of 200 mini-libraries**, distribution of those libraries in a similar number of classrooms for teachers and students; organization of **100 mobile mini libraries** that would remain in different territories, rotating from one community to another to benefit a larger number of people and their families, and **increasing the clubs of teachers from approximately 30 that regularly functioned in 2019 to 50**.

The agreement was signed in April and the period for the Project execution starting in May 2020, because of some difficulties of an administrative nature. In the current month the Project has ended and in the offices of Fe y Alegría are found the records with the details on the delivery of books to each school and organization. In spite of the slight delay the work schedule established was met in terms of price quotes, acquisition, organization of libraries and their delivery and distribution.

The prices obtained, their amounts and selection criteria described in the 2020 project presented were approved by the donor organization. The bids received responded to the quality standards, and the campaign coordination team and members of the Committee were involved in selecting the books.

The activities carried out to ensure the implementation of the project agreement were the following:

- Needs assessment of each organization
- Bidding and purchase of books in accordance with what the project stipulated in coordination with the Fe y Alegría Administration and Project Office.
- Inventory and organization of libraries with the team of Libros para Niños, following criteria established in the WPF project with the backing of the Campaign Coordination Committee
- Delivery of books already organized into libraries to each organization, in the building of Libros para Niño. There were libraries for schools of 30 books each, libraries for reading clubs; libraries of 12 books for reading clubs or community circles, and libraries of 30

books for rotating use depending on the different mobile strategies that each organization had established.

- Transportation of the supply of books by each organization to the territories where they work.

In the consultation done with the different organization to determine their preferences on books to acquire it was detected that books were needed for adults to increase the work of motivating teachers and adolescents to read, and to replace the existence of classic and modern literature for the school libraries as well as existing reading clubs and those to be created. Each organization presented a program in accordance with their priorities.

The contribution of WPF, which has been happening since 2012 was increased this year to US\$ 35,000 in accordance with the donation agreement and specifications. This allowed for the purchase of books worth US\$ 34,024.27, which breaks down in this way: US\$ 20,024.77 Libros para Niños and US \$13,999.50 Híspamer. The expansion of the WPF donation allowed for better quality books to be purchased in 2020, the total number of books acquired was 7,909 which were distributed in 289 prioritized libraries. Also, bulk books were distributed for specific projects of some organizations that participate in the campaign. If it is taken into account that those books were not organized into libraries, it can be said that the goal established in the project was surpassed. To the books acquired with the WPF funds can be added small donations with which a total of 8,050 books were distributed which reinforced support to extra requests.

**Table 1: Organizations benefitted with libraries and books delivered**

Organization	Number of libraries	No of books	Additional texts for mobile libraries	Total No of books
AMCHAM	34 + 2 special libraries.	678	40	718
Asociacion Familia Fabretto	33 + 3 special libraries	504	80	584
Asociacion Fe y Alegria	37	1110	80	1190
CESESMA	45	1170	100	1270
Fundacion Uno	10 + one library	300	30	330
Grupo Terra	40 + 3 libraries	1200	92	1292
Rayo de sol	60	1440	130	1570
Promotora Cultural	1	30	3	33
PCI Nicaragua	20 + 2 libraries	600	50	650
Support for five rural story corners: Macuelizo, Matagalpa y Ocotal de LPN	5	150	15	165
Support to Los Laureles Urban community Center	2	90		99
Loto	1	8		
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>289 + 12<sup>1</sup> =301</b>	<b>7280</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>7909</b>

<sup>1</sup> The special libraries indicated on p. 6 had 282 books.

The new books have been considered by all the organizations as very important for supporting them in working on different reading promotion strategies. Having supplied diverse and high quality literature for children as well as adults has been key in the motivational work and the multiplication of the reading clubs and circles.

By way of example, we mention the following titles considered very important in motivating children to read who participate in reading routes, corners, clubs and community spaces. These are: “La Bella Griselda”, “Si los besos fueran colores”, “Julieta y su caja de colores”, “El pájaro del alma”, “Tengo miedo”, “Cosas que pasan”, “Alex quiere un Dinosaurio”, “El profesor Peter y la fabulosa Guitarra”, “Regalo Sorpresa”, “Cómplices”, “Las Mejores Fabulas”, “Clemencia”, “El secreto de los ninjas”.

In the case of youth and adults, including teachers, the preferred books were: “Prisioneros de los hombres”, “Viaje bajo el mar”, “La fuga”, “El sabor”, “El abominable hombre de las nieves”, “El misterio de los mayas”, “A toda velocidad”, “Hasta el infinito, y más allá”, “Isla del terror”, “Al Final las palabras”, “Persuasión”, “Las aventuras de Tom Sawyer”, “Malala”, “Subasta”, “Familia de cuchillos”, “Todo el viento del mundo”, “El Hombre invisible”, Nujenn.

Books of national authors and poets continue consider being important, first in line being: Rubén Darío, Lizandro Chavez, Fernando Silva, Sergio Ramírez and Gioconda Belli. Also considered very useful were the collections of classics, such as: “Romeo and Julieta”, “Little Women”, “The Ghost of Canterville”, stories of Oscar Wilde, “The Little Prince” and “The Phantom of the Opera”.

In November, sponsored by Save the Children and taking advantage of a respite provided by COVID, LPN [Libros Para Niños] held a workshop to train ten promoters of reading. With this Save the Children and LPN reinforced the work of promoting love for quality reading while strengthening the methodological mastery of the work of reading out loud to different audiences – among the participating educators from the NGOs and Foundations who are participating in the campaign. With this workshop one of the commitments contracted with WPF was met, planned as a counterpart action of the campaign in the project design.

### Assessments, perceptions of users, teachers and promoters about Reading and new books

Member organizations and foundations of the campaign think that thanks to this donation new reading promotion initiatives were able to be opened, and reading clubs and circles strengthened and multiplied. This is documented in Annex 1, the encounters of small groups using protective

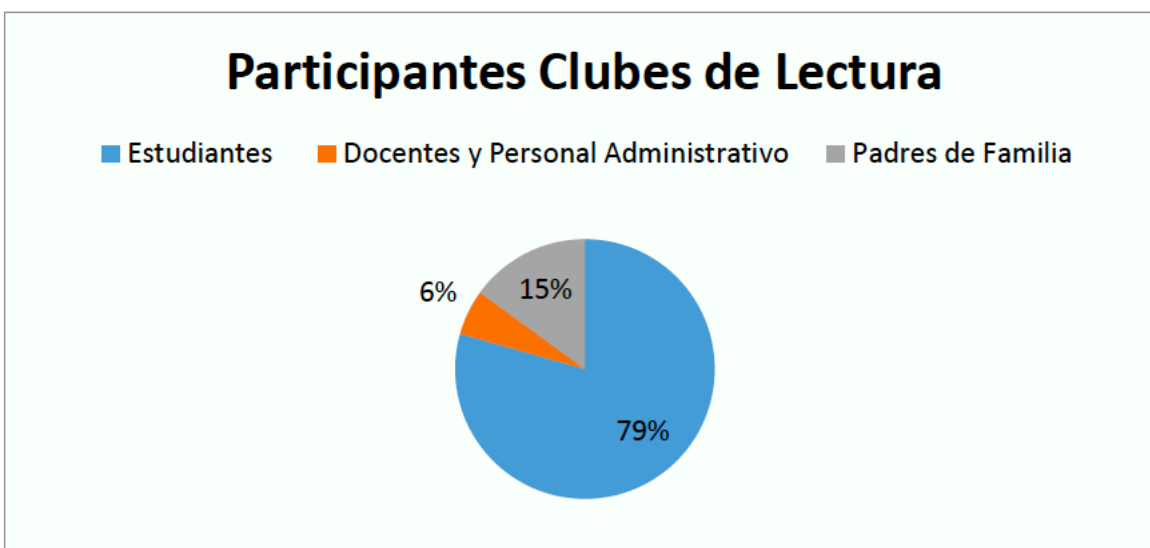
masks to prevent the spread of infection. Also, visits were continued to families on the part of Reading promoters participating in the campaign.

The different organizations think that the use of the books was effective, and that the school libraries contributed a lot in this regard, which have been established as a key reference point for carrying out activities within the classroom. Among other activities of importance, reading aloud stands out – for improving reading fluidity – and the promotion of the comprehension of what is read. Students have been motivated and their teachers have been able to make progress in developing their interest in reading which is crucial for learning to read and write well.

There is a very positive appreciation of the quality of the new literature delivered, which included a lot of biographies and books about real events which have ended up being interesting for youth and adults.

There was a real multiplication of the circles just as proposed in the Project. Just taking into account the data from Fundación Terra the goals were surpassed. Fundación Terra, which had not created reading clubs nor circles in 2019, organized 52 bodies to promote reading, in which 3,100 primary and secondary students participated, as well as 221 teachers and librarians, and 584 parents, for a total of 3,905 people involved. It is worth noting that within this large group of children, youth and adults involved, 1,613 were girls and young women, 197 were female teachers, and 384 were mothers, which represents 55.3% of the total. The Fabretto Family Association covered 1,325 children with this effort of promoting reading.

Graph 1 from Fundación Terra on **Participants in Reading Clubs**



Blue= Students; Orange = Teachers and administrative staff; Grey = parents



We present expressions which are a testimony of how these new books were assessed. They are direct quotes.

*“..When I saw the books they caught my attention, above all “Malala”, I had already read about that story, but it seems like this book is more complete”* Joseling Manzanares Reading Club of La Colonia Agrícola.

*“I like books based on real stories, like”:* “Subasta”, “Familia de cuchillos”, among others”. Anabely Arauz-La Colonia

*“They are beautiful, most are new. It is good to bring us books, to have variety.”* –Heydin, Reading Club of La Colonia Agrícola.

*“The new books are important they encourage us to continue reading and we get to know new stories and writers, I want to read Malala”.* Axel-Reading Club La Colonia Agrícola

*“I like to read a lot, I think that reading helps me and awakens my mind and makes us better intellectuals”.*

*“I love it when new books come in, because I am sure that I will read every last one of them, and with new books, I can continue. I like the new books, they are interesting, I have read many books of the Reading Club and having new ones is a great opportunity”.* Joseling Amador-Reading Club.

*“The new books fascinate me, I want to read them and smell all of them, I want to take them to my house enjoying above all the one called “El Sabor del amor”, I love them, I have read so many books from the Reading Club and everyday I want to read more. Thanks for the books that you sent us”.* Mayerling Centeno-Reading Club of la Dalia.

*“It is a form of entertainment that benefits us, it transports me to another world and expands my imagination, my knowledge in an entertaining and interesting way”.* Jeseydy-Reading Club of la Dalia.

*“I feel that it is a new experience that I will have, I love getting to know new characters, I love the books that address or are developed within the culture of the Mideast, to learn about new culture. I admire that culture”.* Diana Blandón-Reading Club of La Dalia.

In terms of interesting experiences, we still have more to gather, because to prepare this report gathering the reports was still in process. The first is Fundación Terra, an organization that organized for the first time reading clubs and reading spaces guided by their educators, and with that have broken new ground, because their teachers are now discussing the content of the different readings through Whatsapp groups.

Another experience to highlight is that of PCI, according to an interview with Olga Munguía, education director for that NGO, the reading circles for adults have ended up being enormously important for their work. She explains that they are coordinated by women and that apart from

contributing to improving reading among the participants, their families and students, they have contributed to establishing the community work that PCI does along the lines of empowering women<sup>2</sup> in rural territories where patriarchal versions of gender relations persist.

#### **IV – The course “Improving the teaching of reading”**

This first course was organized and taught in the midst of the pandemic was partially financed by PCI Nicaragua with \$10,000. These funds were used essentially to record the videos, setting up the platform and providing economic support to the developer of this effort. The honoraria of the specialist who did the filming, and prepared the methodological bases for the course, selected the bibliography and prepared the tests were donated, and were equal to 60% of the funds contributed by PCI.

This type of course can be included in the category of MOOCs, because each student can do it at their own pace, which is why it is prerecorded and can be taken by computer or cell phone. This design was considered because of the lack of wifi in most rural and farther away areas of the country, and the fact that the greater majority of teachers do not have computers in the public schools. The content of the course can be considered to be basic, given that among the tentative universe to cover there were a lot of empirical teachers with level of schooling from 6-9 years. The videos were short. Keeping in mind the difficulties in connection, the course is, was and continues to be accessible 24/7, which facilitates study by adults with family and work obligations.

The general objective of the course was:

**“Strengthen the teaching skills to improve the teaching-learning of reading and writing in primary grades in schools located in distant territories, whose teachers teach students from low-income families”.**

The specific course objectives were:

- a. That teachers, advisers and facilitators might know the basic skills that they should teach their students, and which ones they should emphasize
- b. That teachers, advisers and facilitators might acquire mastery of fun strategies to be able to teach these skills in an attractive and fun way.
- c. That teachers, advisers and facilitators might know the different reasons for the problems in learning reading and writing identified in research done in Nicaragua and the region.
- d. That teachers, advisers and facilitators might learn to solve these problems as efficiently as possible.

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<sup>2</sup> There are several reports on the use of the libraries expected, which is why the information offered about them is still limited.

The content of the first course was:

- What is phonological awareness and how to teach it?
- What is the alphabetical principle and how is it taught?
- How can students be helped to master de-codification skills to be able to read fluidly?
- How to work on expanding the vocabulary of these students?
- How to get students to master tools for increase their capacity to extract meaning from what they read or understand?
- How to teach writing along with working on reading and oral expression so that students can communicate appropriately?

The course officially began on Tuesday June 23, 2020, but it continued with open registration throughout the semester. Even in December six people registered. It is worth mentioning that among the students in the course there were two Guatemalan teachers, one from Argentina and one from Russia. This could be due to the fact that it was publicized on the “On line learning Platform” OLI, an NGO based in Washington that covers as a priority Guatemala.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the course combined basic theoretical notions on teaching reading and writing, provision of bibliography on the topic, and practical elements presented in the form of model lessons during the videos, as well as in lessons that were placed on the platform. The emphasis of the course was placed on “how to do the classes”. The course sought to help the teachers have tools to teach, using scientific evidence as reference points, and that their methodologies be dynamic, in order to get the students to master the key skills of reading and writing. The evidence that was used as a reference came from the accumulation of world studies and research on learning to read and write, also that done in Nicaragua.

The initial calculation was that the course could be taught in 6 weeks, but a good part of those registered finished it in less time thanks to the follow-up that the facilitators of the NGO participants in the campaign maintained throughout the course.

This first course had placed at the service of the teachers five videos that lasted a maximum of 12 minutes and a minimum of 7. The bibliography placed on the platform was large, but also a selection was done of the most important pages for those who did not have a habit of reading or simply were empirical teachers with limited academic background. 18 practical lessons were made available in the course, at an average of three per each skill to be developed. The videos ended up being very dynamic and were done with a lot of dedication on the part of COMUNICA. To be able to pass from one module to the next in the course, it was a requirement to pass relatively simple tests, but it must be acknowledged that for technical reasons as well as for difficulties on the part of some teachers in mastering the content, the number of opportunities to pass the test had to be

increased. Originally it was three, and only in this way was it possible to keep the number of teachers registered in the course to remain and continue their learning until they were able to pass the test.

To do the videos the following steps were taken: first, six power point presentations were prepared, one for each topic of the course. From those power points guides were developed; then COMUNICA hired an editor and an animator with whom the instructor discussed the guides for a month. Later the filming was done that took six days of more than 8 hours of work each day. A presenter was hired for those recordings so that the videos might be more pleasing, because it would not have been very entertaining to have just one person record the entire content. The next step was editing and animation. And finally the process of review and correction of small errors in the videos. This effort took nearly seven weeks because the pandemic turned it into a complex job. Everything except the filming was done by zoom or whatsapp, which made the work difficult because of internet problems.

It is important to specify that having designed the course to be implemented by cell phone implied big technical adjustments in terms of images as well as sound.

**Table 2 Technical problems solved by the developer**

No.	Problem	Solution
1	Problems registering on the web. (human error)	Follow-up was done on each case, provided by the different organizations, helping in the registration of participants who had not been able to register.
2	Participants blocked from progressing in the course because they did not pass the test in three tries and in the time frame established	Follow-up was provided to each case, a grace period was provided- instead of increasing the attempts to pass the test to four – so that the participants were able to finish the test they had pending.
3	Platform unavailable due to updating.	Placed back on the platform once the problem was detected.
4	Errors in registration, wrote their email addresses wrong (human errors).	Email problems were corrected, such as writing gemail instead of gmail.
5	Participants not downloading the multimedia resources in their modules.	A repository of resources was created so they might have better and easier access.
6	Confusion with registration.	The registration page was changed so that it had a different and more user friendly design

**Table 3 General Data**

	Number	Percentages
Students registered	1125	100%
Passed five tests administered in the course	741	65%

Registered but did not take the course	221 <sup>3</sup>	19%
Partially passed more than 51% and up to 71% of the course	16	1.5%
Passed 43%, and 29% of the course	48	4.2%
Passed only 14% of the course	99	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1125</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to data collected by the participating organizations, in June 618 teachers registered in the course, nevertheless, there were organizations that continued registering after the formal beginning. PCI, given their interest in doing training – because of commitments contracted with their donor – registered a large number of teachers, which is why, of the 221 who did not start the course, there is an overrepresentation of 95 teachers in schools served by this organization. The 95 are from the RAACS and the explanations that PCI offers about the problem are powerful, shedding light on the terrible inequity that exists in Nicaragua in terms of the availability of in service, direct and on line training.

Olga Munguía --from PCI--, reports that in RAACS there were a lot of problems of a technical nature. And just this Region – part of the Caribbean, where in-service on site training is expensive because it requires moving teachers from their zone – generally through rivers – and then paying travel allowances of food and lodging in a region where they are high given the transportation difficulties. Therefore, it is important to address mechanisms to deal with the root problems of these issues, but the inequity that exists, added to the effect of negative natural phenomena will continue worsening, to the detriment of the children and youth already discriminated against for reasons of ethnic group, maternal language and isolation.

This “on-line option” which is cost effective, according to the same source, worked very well in urban, semi-urban and even rural areas of Jinotega and Matagalpa, but, to be able to be effective in other places of the country, above all the Caribbean, required: i) that the organizations involved in the campaign who serve distant municipalities formed alliances with other bodies and pressured the companies that provide the telephone service to improve their signal; ii) train the teachers in the use of the phone technology to help them take advantage of this type of opportunity, iii) in the work projects explore the possibility of assigning funds for the purchase of smart phones to be distributed among their facilitators, or among selected teachers who would function as study circle coordinators who in this way could be responsible for downloading the videos and study literature; iv) analyze the possibility of implementing other solutions with the use of videos in smaller sized face to face workshops. Also the solutions that some organizations offered could be revisited – in this case CESESMA – to the technological problems. In face of a lack of signal in schools that CESESMA served in Rancho Grande and La Dalia, for the course to continue they used an external

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that those 221 did not even start the course

hard drive that COMUNICA kindly recorded all the content of the videos. Separately they downloaded the bibliography for distribution among the teachers.

Discussing and addressing mechanisms were recommended for dealing with these principal problems, if not the inequity that exists, added to the effects of the negative natural phenomena, will continue worsening to the detriment of the children and the youth already discriminated against for reasons of ethnic group, maternal language and isolation.

The second course had the support of Silvio Gutiérrez and Gertrudis Mayorga from Save the Children and Fabretto, both have Masters degrees in Education, who with the support of Vanessa Castro recorded part of the modules that this course had whose start date could be February or March.

## Course Assessments

### CONTENT

From the point of view of content, an oral report from PCI, written reports from AMCHAM, CESESMA and Fabretto and the emails reviewed weekly by the instructor indicate that the course was evaluated as “very good.” Details about this opinion go along the lines of the following:

- The course –is good – because it provides tools for the process of teaching and learning
- The teachers have had the opportunity to acquire new forms of directing the learning
- It has been very useful because it has allowed them to acquire new knowledge, learn new strategies, and reinforce knowledge
- The practical lessons were evaluated as very important, mentioning the syllables and words races as useful; as well as activities for the development of writing, promoting that the students write stories.

A key area for learning about which it was known that there were limitations using the FAS methodology- has been phonological awareness. The teachers report that the course has allowed them to reinforce their knowledge about the sounds of the letters and to put into practice this knowledge with their students. Continuing in this topic there are reports indicating that the course allowed them to acquire new strategies for learning about phonological awareness and be motivated to implement its instruction with the first and second grade children. For this area a video was uploaded – among the extra resources – with the sounds of the letters because it was known that they did not know some of them.

In general, they assessed that the course was accessible and the content easily understood, as well as the bibliographical material, adequate. Nevertheless, some teachers of FABRETTO mentioned

that the questions of the tests ended up being confusing for them. These tests and those questions in particular were corrected by the instructor with the support of Martha Lidia Padilla and Nohemí Molina, two very outstanding colleagues from CESESMA.

In the emails there were two concerns about teaching for students with cognitive differences. They asked for writing exercises for left handed students, and bibliographical material on “inclusion”. With the support of colleagues who have a mastery over these areas, particularly Silvio Gutierrez from Save the Children and Fiorella Castro from ANL, participants in the Let’s Read campaign, these requests were met.

In terms of other specific concerns, there was one about how many digraphs there were and how they were defined, and another one about how the word aguacate is divided (a-gua-ca-te). These concerns were responded by email and there were no more questions about that.

### GENERAL ASPECTS

The online course that started in very difficult moments made evident the enormous interest to learn on the part of the teachers. In most organizations there were no possibilities to provide economic support to the teachers so that they might buy “cell data” given that in Nicaragua the internet coverage is not more than 20% of the territory and is concentrated in urban areas. In spite of that, and the fact that salaries are very limited for the teachers, a good part of whom registered and studied in the course, their data was paid for, to take advantage of this free offer that the campaign created in large measure through the support of PCI and COMUNICA and which was provided continuity through funds from Loto and Grupo Pellas.

There was a lot of creativity, the creation of study groups through whatsapp stands out for supporting the teachers in their problems of a technical nature as well as discussion on the course topics. These whatsapp groups did not exist prior to the pandemic and come to highlight how on line communication can be an enormous aid for teacher training, and to strengthen teamwork of the teachers and their advisers which is vital for professional improvement for those who to a large extent have in their hands the future of our children.

The percentage of those who passed and therefore retention was high, more than 65%. If the 221 people who registered but did not start the course are subtracted, and the 95 (8.4% of total) teachers from the RAACS (Tortuguero, La Cruz de Río Grande, Cukra Hill, Laguna de Perlas, Bluefields); the retention is even higher, rising to 73.4%. Comparing this percentage of retention and passing with what other online courses have, even paid courses- this one was completely free – it can be pointed out that the course was highly successful. This is even more relevant if the high dropout rate of MOOCs courses is taken into account, which according to a recent study done by the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) <sup>4</sup>, said: “*In MOOC style online courses, dropout rates reach 96%. This percentage did not improve between 2013 -2018 in the edX courses offered by Harvard and MIT*”.

From this point of view the success obtained is even more hopeful and is fully connected to what was promoted by organizations very committed to the development of Nicaragua, its children and adolescence and education as a vital instrument to ensure a better future to the nation.

## V Miscellaneous Activities

### Stories recorded for radio

In the UCA with the support of the Cultural Coordination area and the Department of Communication a total of 15 stories were recorded for adults and youth. They were chosen with the support of Dr. Sergio Ramírez, ensuring that the selection was representative of national, Latin American writers, and also some classics.

The stories chosen were:

1. *Algo muy grave va a suceder en este pueblo* – Gabriel Garcia Marquez
2. *Los conejos Blancos* - Leonora Carrington
3. *El fantasma de Canterville*-- Oscar Wilde
4. *El loro pelado*-- Horacio Quiroga
5. *El pequeño escribiente Florentino*-- Edmundo de Amicis
6. *El príncipe Feliz* -- Oscar Wilde
7. *El sueco* -- Ernesto Cardenal
8. *Un día de Estos* -- Gabriel Garcia Marquez
9. *Las Perdidas de Juan Bueno*—Rubén Darío
10. *Shakira y la Mosca* – Sergio Ramírez
11. *Nos han dado la tierra* – Juan Rulfo
12. *Los húngaros* --Fernando Silva -
13. *La jarra de plata* -- Truman Capote –
14. *Nosotros* fragmento -- Adolfo Calero Orozco -
15. *La Sangre de Cristo* -- Adolfo Calero Orozco

Prior coordination was established with the Education Committee of AMCHAM that these stories would be broadcast on local radios. Reports have not been gathered yet on the implementation of this activity, but the stories are in the hands of the Fundación Pantaleón and Amcham which is why it is expected that they will be broadcast in 2021.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.ft.com/content/60e90be2-1a77-11e9-b191-175523b59d1d>



40 audio versions of children's stories were also distributed through whatsapp among the participants in the campaign, which were only available on You Tube videos. LPN did the adaptation of these videos to audio stories or podcasts with the support of a Guatemalan foundation, because it was thought that only in this way would they be heard on the radio and on cell phones with limited connectivity.

## Scholarships

With funds from ANL complemented by resources of the campaign, money was gathered and a supply of resources in order to provide 12 scholarships in cash to 12 children. These scholarships consisted in clothing, shoes, backpack and school supplies.

The organization of the educational packages, as well as the purchase of the backpacks, uniforms and school supplies was the responsibility of CINADE. And the organizations that serve the schools where these students study took on the responsibility for the distribution of the packages and the amount of \$100 in cash for each family. There were two small problems that were able to be solved, the first created with the confiscation of IPADE which was resolved with the support of the former educational facilitator of this organization in the Siuna area, the other in Nueva Guinea where the project from which the scholarship came ceased to exist; in the second case Fabretto supported the provision of the scholarship to the benefitting girl. The only scholarship that was not able to be given was the responsibility of Cuculmecca and the amount was returned to the funds administered by CINADE.

The provision of the scholarships was done in February 2020.

## VI -Conclusions: accomplishments obtained and proposals

The principal accomplishment in this year of pandemic and hurricanes was having sustained the work in favor of reading in two directions. Particular relevance is given to the distribution of 8,050 books on various topics and quality literature including classics and texts of Nicaraguan authors for children, youth and adults, which allowed for broad promotion of reading in communities and schools, thanks to the support of WPF and their generous donation.

These are very important accomplishments which should be highlighted because they were carried out while facing multiple difficulties, including the following:

1. Having a network of 301 small but significant libraries to contribute to the entertainment of children, adolescent students, teachers and relatives of the children who participate in the schools registered in the campaign. As one of the members of the clubs pointed out, having

access to interesting books allowed her to “clear her mind”<sup>5</sup> in moments of a lot of stress. This network for the promotion of reading which functions thanks to the donation of WPF, according to the organizations that make up and direct the campaign, strengthens the psycho-social programs and the work of emotional support to the families and the educational community which has been done since 2018.

2. Having been able to design and implement a complete course to be taught by cell phones and where more than 1,100 people registered, obtaining a retention rate of better than 70% and percentage who passed of those who took the test of 98% with high grades.
3. A third accomplishment is having organized two courses which will be offered in 2021.
4. Even though we do not have the evaluations of the distribution of the audio-stories recorded for radio, this was an effort that can continue benefitting the love for good literature and interesting stories in 2021.

The campaign Let’s Read, Reading is Fun is composed of a network of foundations and organizations that have been working in favor of education for many years now, some do it exclusively in Nicaragua, others are international, and others operate in Central America.

The funds which are used come from donations of international NGOs like Winds of Peace, which contributed \$34,000<sup>6</sup> dollars for the purchase of books; and Save the Children which financed the workshop for the reading promoters in November, even though the cost of it we do not have yet. Private enterprise for its part donated \$5,750.00 from Grupo Pellas: \$3,000; LOTO:1,750 LOTO and an anonymous donor \$1,000.00. The Fundación Terra and Fundación UNO contributed 600.00 and 300 dollars respectively for the courses.

The 2020 budget was US\$55,850. But that does not include the voluntary work of many of those who participate in this collective effort. Just the counterpart amount for the organization and filming of the course is close to \$6,500.00; the transportation of the libraries from Managua to the territories where they are used is calculated to be \$5,100. If these counterpart funds for WPF are included and the donation of time to organize and film the courses, the 2020 budget was \$73,950.00. It is possible that this budget underestimates other donations of time and definitely does not include the workshop financed by Save the Children. It is worth mentioning that the salary expenses that include the platform developer and the person who supports the manager of the campaign and coordinates all the effort of the purchase and distribution of the books represents only 8.3% which is a very low percentage. This very low investment in honoraria reveals how

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<sup>5</sup> Teacher quoted above

<sup>6</sup> US\$1000 of the Project are for Fe y Alegría because they ensure the administration of the funds

the dedication and love in working for the development of the poorest children of the nation is an important motor for work when there is a genuine and selfless commitment to the future of Nicaragua.

### Points about a potential work plan:

In 2021 –hoping that the pandemic would have receded a bit – it is proposed to systematize the most successful experiences of reading promotion through the clubs, circles and networks to socialize the learnings and identify needs.

In the area of training and use of the digital platform it is considered important to discuss in depth how to work to eradicate the digital illiteracy of teachers and prepare them better for the work requirements on-line which the pandemic has made urgent for their formation and improvement. There are three courses available for 2021: *“How to teach to read and write better”* which can be taken by whoever wants to; *“A model for improving the quality of teaching: the importance of planning, systematically evaluating the learning, and accompanying in the classroom”*, and a course completely financed by Save the Children yet to be uploaded: *“Inclusion, social-emotional education, and children’s rights”*.

Raising the quality of education moves through improving the quality of teachers. That is why professional training is very important. The offer of in-service training fills the multiple gaps left by the initial training and unfortunately the opportunity to raise the quality of public education, which is inferior for those who most need the support, rests on this offer. That is why it is very relevant to analyze how to contribute to the work on-line being better used, and thus provide cost effective opportunities for personal improvement to Nicaraguan teachers who teach in schools where the risk of school failure is higher. The participating organizations in the campaign have shown a lot of creativity in finding solutions and analyzing them and drawing lessons from them is highly recommended.

There are now specific plans, particularly from PCI to make use of the courses of the platform through face-to-face workshops with the support of a facilitator. These workshops will have a smaller number of participants – 15 in total – who wearing masks and maintaining distance, would see the compressed and prerecorded videos on a USB and would read the bibliography that will be printed and placed in a dossier. Assessing this experience and that of CESESMA as alternatives to the limitations of connectivity could be a task for 2021 as well.

## IV- Annexes

### Annex 1

#### Visual report in a pdf

**Annex 2****Technical report on the promotion of readings and use of texts donated by WPF, from Asociación Padre Fabretto****Annex 3****Technical Report Fundación Terra in Excel****Annex 4****Scholarship winners and organization responsible for their follow up****IPADE- RAACN**

No	Names	Age	Shoe size	Shirt size	Skirt or pants size	Observations
1	Arlen Beanira Aguilar Pérez	12	37	14	12	
2	Yenifer Seleth Vargas Espinoza	11	36	14	12	She is a very big girl, that is why her size is large
3	Darielka López Canales	10	28	8	10	
4	Francis Rebeca González Vásquez	10	32	10	12	She is a very tall girl and that is why her size is tall

**Rayo de Sol-Matagalpa**

No	Names	Age	Shoe size	Shirt size	Skirt or pants size	Observations
5	Mryorie Martinez Alvarado	9	36	9	8	NA

**CAPRI-Managua**

No	Names	Age	Shoe size	Shirt size	Skirt or pants size	Observations
7	Job Abraham Jarquin V	10	34	10	10	
8	Jazmin Guiselle Salazar	10	32	10	10	
9	Joselin Danai Zelaya	10	34	10	10	

**Amcham**

No	Names	Age	Shoe size	Shirt size	Skirt or pants size	Observations
10	Misael Abraham Barahona	10	36	12	12	
11	DIEDERICK JOSE MEDINA GARCIA	9	29	6 0 7	22	

**Fundación TERRA**

No	Names	Age	Shoe size	Shirt size	Skirt or pants size	Observations
12	NatalY Alejandra gutierrez	9	12	8	27	

**Annex 5**

List of stories made into “podcasts” in Excel