

**Country:** Nicaragua

**IPU geographical group:** Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)

### **National Assembly of Nicaragua**

**Focus area:** Innovative approaches to building an information system to advance SDG alignment and inform equity-focused and rights-based laws and budgets to ensure no one is left behind.

### **Key highlights (messages)**

- Parliaments can explore different ways of improving work procedures and systems to ensure that the principle of leaving no one behind is mainstreamed in the legislative process.
- Parliaments can design practical tools to monitor the enabling environment for SDG issues of critical importance and foster cross-cutting and intersectional considerations in draft laws and amendments.

### **Context**

The National Assembly of Nicaragua formed a monitoring group tasked to oversee compliance with the SDGs. The SDG Group includes four members of parliament (MPs), one of which is the First Vice-President of the Board of Directors of the National Assembly and the other three are chairpersons of parliamentary committees. SDG Group members' initial mandate ends in 2021 but the group will continue its work with new members elected in the November 2021 elections. The SDG Group guides the actions of other committees based on regular monitoring of their compliance with the SDGs, prepares evaluation reports and develops other knowledge products to support the MPs' work. The SDG Group works closely with the General Directorate of Legislative Affairs and the parliamentary committee in charge of coordinating the technical affairs of the 14 standing committees. This allows for a systematic inclusion of the SDGs in the legislative process, and for proper and timely advice and guidance to MPs in the adoption of or amendments to draft laws.

### **SDGs integration in parliament's core functions**

The innovative reference tool called the Institutional Policies Information System (SIP-AN) that has been developed provides detailed information on each approved regulation. It registers information under the following categories: the name and number of the law, date of approval and publication, subject and objectives of the law and its explicit contribution to the achievement of one or more specific SDG targets. In addition to the SDGs, the SIP-AN includes references to a number of cross-cutting and intersectional data on, among other: the people targeted; the expected social segment benefits; issues related to interculturality, climate change, gender equality; and intergenerational issues. The SIP-AN also allows MPs and committees to verify which SDG is being incorporated into each draft legislation before its enactment. Depending on the thematic area, the process of entering information into the system is the responsibility

of the technical staff of each committee under the coordination and supervision of the deputies of each committee.

The General Directorate for Budgetary and Economic Analysis and Monitoring ensures that the proposed budget and public policies are aligned with the SDG framework. The General Directorate carries out comprehensive SDG analyses, monitors and evaluates the country's General Budget before it is submitted to the National Assembly's Technical Committee of Investments and Technical Committee of Debt for debate and endorsement by the MPs.

To ensure accountability towards citizens and SDG commitments, and transparency in the public spending of the General Budget of Nicaragua, a strong focus has been placed on programmes and projects that promote the fight against and reduction of poverty in all its dimensions. Given the limited financial resources available to reach through targeted actions those furthest behind first, several loan agreements have been approved through legislative decrees with international finance institutions.

#### **Innovative approaches to enable progress to:**

##### **(i) Achieve universal health coverage for all and improve access to quality health care, including to sexual and reproductive health services, for vulnerable and marginalized populations**

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the National Assembly has adopted three laws and 11 legislative decrees that aim to improve access to health care and services for vulnerable and marginalized populations. One of these measures is the Law of the Nicaraguan Legal Digest on Health Matters that consolidates and secures the legal framework enabling access to health care. The Law on National Centers for Mobile Health Clinics, among other things, promotes a model of family and community health that places emphasis on prevention, self-care and shared responsibility for the preservation of health. Furthermore, access in rural and urban areas to health care with quality services are legally regulated as well as guarantees of coverage of the population's general and specialized medical needs, including, among other services, expert consultations, dental exams, laboratory and special tests, ultrasounds, pap smears.

In addition, the funding available through the international loan agreements is complemented by national financial resources to help strengthen the family and community health model concept, as well as the capacities and actions of the Ministry of Health to reduce the health disparities and accelerate the reduction of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality throughout the country. The financial agreements also contribute to: the upgrading and improvement of the infrastructure; replacement of emergency room equipment in hospitals; expanding the coverage and improving the quality of medical care for the most prevalent health conditions, with an emphasis on the needs and particularities of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

These additional resources helped strengthen the capacity of the health system during the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, reduced the morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 and mitigated the other indirect effects of the pandemic on the health of the population while considering the special needs of the most vulnerable groups and healthcare workers.

## **(ii) Integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change measures into national laws, policies and strategies**

The General Budget of the country balances the three dimensions of sustainable development and includes a number of measures for institutional capacity-building, and the protection, conservation and sustainable development of Earth. As a result, there has been a significant increase in investments in the renewable energy sector (e.g., wind, geothermal and hydroelectric power), reaching a 75.8 per cent renewable energy share in the total energy mix of the country and 99 per cent nationwide electricity coverage. The General Budget provides for sufficient financial resources to further develop and increase the share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix of the country. In close cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies, the National Assembly supported the formulation and endorsement of a number of climate-related and resilience legal measures covering different environmental aspects, including adherence to the Agreement on the Establishment of the Global Green Growth Institute. The National Assembly ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and developed national approaches to implement emissions reductions. Also, these approaches are included in the nationally determined contribution (NDC) as well as in the country's long-term strategies.

Moreover, in the National Plan to Fight Poverty and for Human Development (2022-2026), the government prioritized different incentives for new green investments through technological, economic and environmental alternatives that will benefit vulnerable families and communities. The Plan includes 13 environmental and climate change projects that are financed and supported through the technical and economic cooperation of different partners. The projects focus on strengthening the management of protected areas, climate governance, the sustainable use of natural resources, the promotion of environmentally sound goods and services and planning for additional investments.

Nicaragua has been taking active steps to become a reference country at a global level with its comprehensive model for environmental protection and sustainable development where people and local communities take the leading role. The National Assembly has also supported various policies, programmes and legal initiatives for the achievement of SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) to improve the sustainable management of water and sanitation for the entire population, as well as to regulate the import and export of toxic substances.

### **Supplementary activities**

The SDG Group supported a range of SDG-related awareness raising activities and inquiries organized by the standing committees, and helped the government to integrate the conclusions of the public consultations on key sustainable development issues during the preparation of the 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR).

### **Challenges and lessons learnt**

Currently, the SDG Group is in the process of validating the SDG legislative tool. It is expected that the tool will be applied by all standing committees in 2022 to enable the comprehensive review before formal approval of every legislative initiative that goes against the SDGs.

The legislative tool can verify the degree of SDG compliance. For example, it has been applied to the Annual Law of the General Budget for 2022 to show the extent of alignment of sectoral strategies and policies to SDGs achievement in a number of sectors, including the health, education, transportation and agricultural sector. The tool enabled to accelerate progress in achieving SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), an important national priority considering that more than 80 per cent of the country's food production is in the hands of small producers. The lessons learnt and successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the continuous national efforts to achieve SDG 2 have been recognized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which reaffirmed that Nicaragua had reduced the index of undernourished population to 16 per cent even before the SDGs were adopted.

#### **Sources and links**

Website of the National Assembly of the Republic of Nicaragua:

[www.asamblea.gob.ni](http://www.asamblea.gob.ni)

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