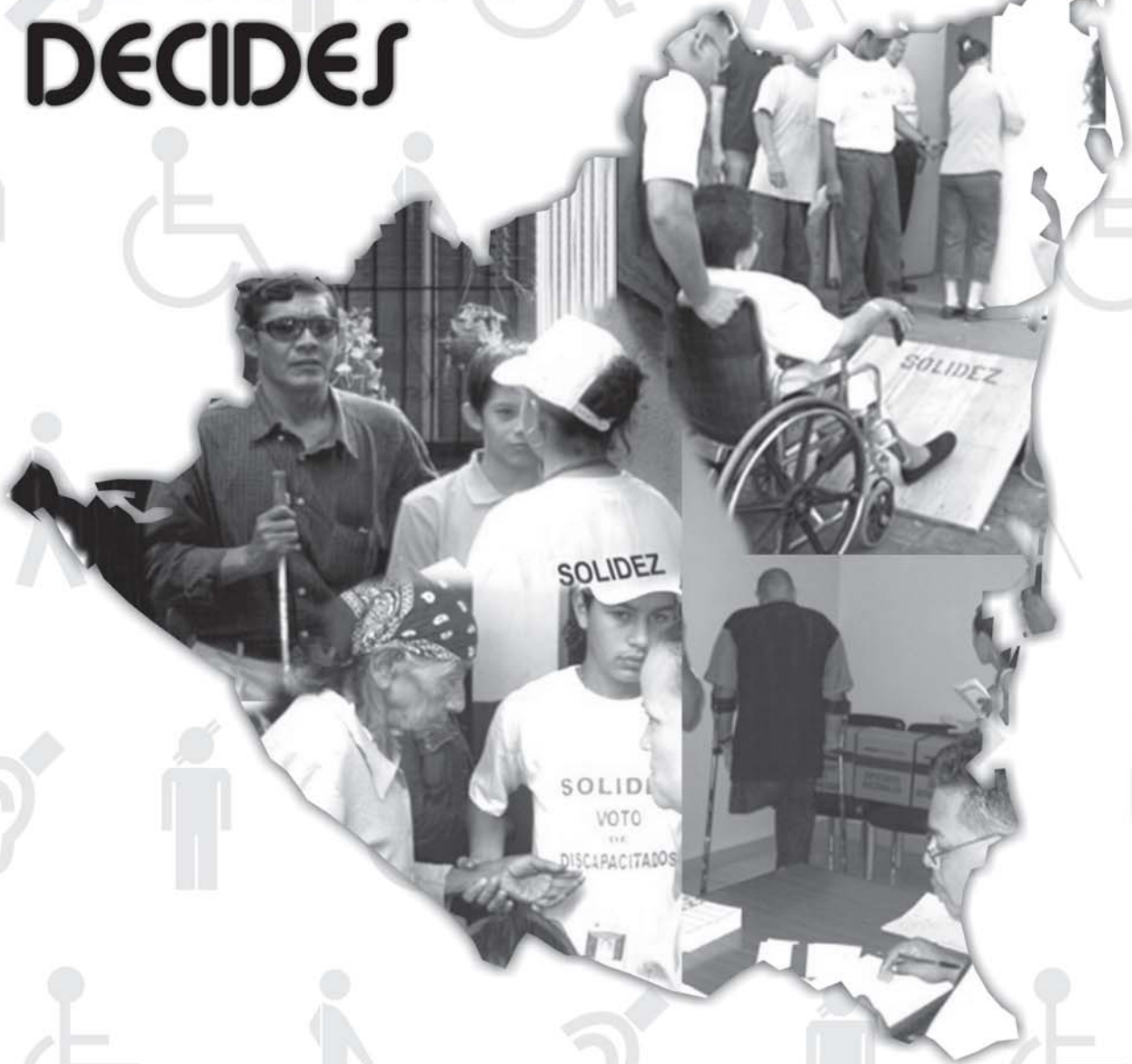


YOUR VOTE COUNTS. YOUR VOTE DECIDES



Nicaragua, Voting by citizens with a disability
National Elections 2006

ENGLISH VERSION

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National Elections 2006

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EDITORS

YOUR VOTE COUNTS, YOUR VOTE DECIDES

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FOREWORD



By Adonai Jiménez Alar
Director General for Electoral Affairs
Supreme Electoral Council

It is a great satisfaction and honor for me to introduce this report on the first experience in support of voting by persons with a disability carried out in Nicaragua, thus complying with that which is set forth in article 119 of the Electoral Law. From the onset, the Supreme Electoral Council approved the idea and had high hopes for the proposal introduced by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in association with the SOLIDEZ Foundation. Together, they mobilized support from a good number of other organizations that work with people that have a disability.

Herein are contained the conclusions reached by the project evaluation effort as well as the lessons learned that may be of benefit to future similar activities. Despite the support offered the project by the Supreme Electoral Council and the hope we all harbored in its success, we are also aware that there were constraints, as is natural in any first experience of this type.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that there is a need for improved coordination between the various participating organizations, which among them proved capable of mobilizing thousands of persons. Hopefully in the future more financial resources will be available in order to extend this activity to all municipalities and polling stations in the country. Ultimately, it would be desirable to reach a situation in which the ballots themselves take into account certain disabilities and make it easier for all persons to vote.

On behalf of the Supreme Electoral Council, and on a personal level, I would like to conclude by congratulating the IFES Foundation for this initiative. Likewise, the SOLIDEZ Foundation is to be congratulated for the leadership it displayed when implementing the project, as are the many organizations that mobilized in support. We thank the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) for the financial support that made possible this innovative, humanitarian and promising experience in Nicaragua.



INTRODUCTION

By Rafael López Pintor
Head of Project
IFES - Nicaragua

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), based in Washington in DC, carried out a technical assistance program in support of the 2006 electoral process in Nicaragua, starting in October 2005. The counterpart institution was the Supreme Electoral Council, which together with IFES proceeded to define those areas in which IFES could collaborate. These were concentrated mainly in the fields of public information regarding the verification of the voter registration list, the preparation and distribution of voter identity cards and the direct training of members of the voting tables in all 153 municipalities in the country.

As part of the public information component a project was designed in support of voting for persons with a disability. From the onset this idea met with the approval and furtherance of the Supreme Electoral Council, specifically through the General Directorate for Electoral Affairs, whose Director Adonai Jiménez left no stone unturned in his efforts to ensure that the project be a success. The agency associated with IFES in this exercise was the SOLIDEZ Foundation, which specializes in assistance to women with a disability. Through its dense network of associations, the SOLIDEZ Foundation was able to mobilize thousands of persons when implementing the project. Most of these groups are members of the Nicaraguan Federation of Organizations Associations for Rehabilitation and Integration (FECONORI).

It is worth highlighting that this was the first time that a project of this kind is undertaken in Nicaragua, in an effort to emulate recent similar activities carried out in other Latin American countries such as Peru and El Salvador. This meant that a host of obstacles and uncertainties of a technical, administrative and logistic nature had to be overcome. The Supreme Electoral Council and its departmental and municipal branches showed tremendous good will, as did the organizations of persons with a disability and countless others at the community and school level, all of whom volunteered their assistance to ensure the success of the project. Given financial constraints in relation to the project's nationwide scope and the thousands of persons it was able to mobilize, it can be said that the success of this effort reflects the enthusiasm shown and willingness to participate by a mass of volunteers spread throughout Nicaragua.

The implementation of this project is part of a wider endeavor that IFES, with financing from the United States Agency for International Develop-



ment (USAID) is carrying out this year in four countries, namely Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Albania and Armenia. In Nicaragua additional financing was made available by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

On behalf of IFES we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to USAID and SIDA. We also extend our congratulations to the Supreme Electoral Council, the SOLIDEZ Foundation and the associated civil society organizations for the enthusiasm and efficacy displayed in the implementation of this project.

This publication appears in a single volume in the Spanish and English languages, with a view toward facilitating greater access by those interested in the issue. A Photo Section is included to illustrate in a graphic manner the more relevant aspects of the project. This section is set independently from the Spanish and English text, but a reference to the different images is indicated next to the corresponding paragraphs in the text. An annex is also appended including different documents, the content of which is indicated in the appropriate places of the text.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A truly impressive number of persons have collaborated on this project, and it would indeed be onerous for the reader that we thank each one of them individually. On behalf of IFES and the SOLIDEZ Foundation, we extend our gratitude to all those who participated in the project, in recognition of their selfless work and the hope of being able to count on their continued support in future elections. Nonetheless, there are some persons whom we wish to thank by name, because without their help or material and affective support the project would not have been possible. These are the officers of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and especially those in the democracy program: Steven Hendrix, Danika Walters and Selma Tijerino; the Swedish Ambassador to Nicaragua Mrs. Eva Zetterberg and the Embassy's project manager Ximena Barreto; the CSE's Director General for Electoral Affairs Adonai Jiménez Alar and his closest collaborators Víctor Calderón and Eugenio Contreras; SOLIDEZ Foundation employees Noel Ortega, Rafael Burgos and Berna Espinoza as well as the 19 monitors team under the coordination of María Félix Herrera in charge of overlooking the entire operation on elections day; the SOLIDEZ branch Associations of Women with a Disability around the country; the Center for the Promotion of Rehabilitation in Leon; La Luz Organization in Masaya; the North Atlantic Region Organization for the Disabled; the audiovisual production expert Rodolfo Alegría López; the special advisor to IFES on voting for persons with a disability, Jerry Mindes, and the closest IFES collaborators in Washington for the Nicaragua program, Pablo Galarce, Carlos Hinojosa García and Eric Lynn; IFES coordinator with SOLIDEZ Foundation Adán Palacios; and Managua office assistant Gerardo Montoya Gallego. To all of them our heartfelt gratitude.

THE EDITORS



I. **PROJECT** **DESCRIPTION**

A) GENERAL REMARKS

Motivated by the desire to ensure equal rights for all on the occasion of the national elections for president, vice president, and members of the legislative branch held in Nicaragua on 5 November 2006, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) organized and implemented a project in support for voting by citizens with a disability.

The project included the following activities:

- a) Making an inventory of voting centers with accessibility problems.
- b) Building of wooden ramps to facilitate access to those centers.
- c) Searching, recruiting and training facilitators of the vote of the disabled as well as guides to inform voters near the voter lists about the location where they should vote.
- d) Launching public information campaigns by the CSE and the associations for the disabled aiming to raise public awareness on the right to vote by the disabled as well as to enhance voter turnout by persons with a disability.
- e) Including directives on the application of Article 119 of the Electoral Law. Providing for the vote of the disabled, in the operation handbook for polling officials *Guía Paso a Paso* as well as in a number of training documents.
- f) Including the discussion on the issue at the different training workshops to polling station officials.
- g) Holding an assessment workshop after the implementation of the project.
- h) Publishing a report describing this first experience in Nicaragua.
- I) Producing a CD Rom with relevant graphic materials about this experience.

The project was financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The project was implemented as a component of the support IFES-Nicaragua provided to the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE, acronym in Spanish), fundamentally for the purpose of facilitating voting by citizens with full capacity to exercise their civil and political rights, but who have a disability that makes it a challenge to exercise their right to vote.

See picture 1: Demonstration by advocate associations in Managua on the eve of elections.



Specific activities were carried out by the SOLIDEZ Foundation, an association in support of women disabled, as well as of other civil society organisations that work with persons that have a disability. Also involved were state agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Family, as were the various departmental delegations of the Supreme Electoral Council.

B) PROJECT TARGET GROUP

Although support for voting by persons with a disability was provided in all fifteen departments, as well as the two North and South Atlantic Autonomous Regions (RAAN and RAAS), it was decided to concentrate efforts on twelve departmental capitals, due to time limitations and availability of financial resources.

In these cities and towns efforts were made to secure the involvement and commitment of the various organizations that work with persons with a disability. The following table shows the relation and makeup of organizations that work with the population segment at which the project was geared.

Table 1: Relation and makeup of organizations linked to the project.

ORGANIZATION	TARGET POPULATION	REMARKS
Organizations of Women w/ a Disability (OMDs)	Women with a disability.	Eighteen organizations that are counterparts of the SOLIDEZ Foundation.
Center for the Promotion of Integral Rehabilitation, León (CEPRIL)	Men and women with a disability.	Located in León.
La Luz Organization	Men and women with a disability.	Located in Masaya.
Local community-based Rehabilitation Commissions	Boys, girls, youth and adolescents with a disability.	Located in the towns of La Paz Centro, Nagarote, Mateare and Tipitapa.
Community Leaders	The entire community.	

There follows a list of the departmental capitals in which the project was implemented:



Table 2: Departmental capitals included in the project

CITY	DEPARTMENT
Juigalpa	Chontales
Estelí	Estelí
Chinandega	Chinandega
Jinotepe	Carazo
Boaco	Boaco
Ocotal	Nueva Segovia
Matagalpa	Matagalpa
Granada	Granada
Rivas	Rivas
Masaya	Masaya
Managua	Managua
León	León

At these departmental capitals needs analyses were undertaken at 832 polling centers in order to identify the obstacles faced by persons with a disability. The logistical support provided to this end by the SOLIDEZ Foundation was invaluable. Also worthy of note was the excellent spirit of collaboration and teamwork displayed by the thirty promoters that were selected and trained to contribute to a project intent upon ensuring compliance with the citizen and civil rights of persons with a disability.

C) SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Once the project was approved by the Supreme Electoral Council, its implementation led to close collaboration between experts at IFES-Nicaragua, the Nicaraguan Federation of Organizations for Rehabilitation and Integration (FECONORI) and relevant CSE staff. The SOLIDEZ Foundation was in charge of actual implementation, with support from organizations dedicated to working with persons that have a disability. The importance of the project can be put into perspective by considering that Nicaragua has a register of 461,000 persons with a disability, of which 55.75% are women and 44.25% are men.

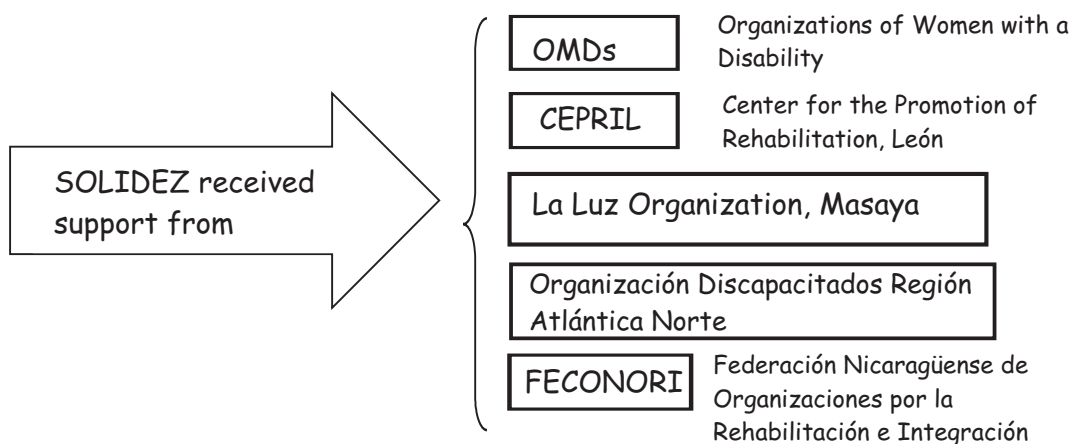
The SOLIDEZ Foundation, charged with project implementation, in turn received support from organizations whose *raison d'être* is to work with persons who have a disability.

Also essential was the presence of the Community-based Local



Rehabilitation Commissions, as well as that of community leaders. These associations contributed in all project phases under the guidance and supervision of the CSE, with services being contracted by IFES.

Figure 1: Support organizations



Prior to implementation, the project planned and carried out the following activities:

1. July and the first fortnight in August: schedule project information activities.
2. Second fortnight in August: prepare the Guide with instructions to facilitate voting by citizens with disability.
3. September and October: train the selected personnel (promoters, facilitators and guides on voter lists) in parallel with the training being offered by the CSE to polling officials.
4. Publicize the project in CSE get-out-the-vote campaigns.
5. Build mobile ramps by which to assist access by the population with a disability at polling centers.

Thirty selected promoters participated in the implementation of the project, leading to:

- a) The organization necessary for developing the project and setting up teams of facilitators for persons with a disability and guides to help them with the voter lists.
- b) Carrying out needs analyses at 832 polling centers in the twelve departmental capitals and other selected locations. All the goals set forth were met, as shown in the following table:



Table 3: Numbers of polling centers and promoters

DEPARTMENTS	POLLING CENTERS	PROMOTERS
Boaco	14	1
Chinandega	37	2
Estelí	47	3
Granada	49	3
Juigalpa	44	3
León	89	3
Ocotal	26	1
Matagalpa	73	3
Masaya	33	2
Jinotepe	18	1
Rivas	22	2
MANAGUA		
District 1	37	1
District 2	53	1
District 3	80	1
District 4	56	1
District 5	56	1
District 6	48	1
TOTAL	832	30

The relevant information concerning the issue of voting by persons with a disability was distributed to national and international election observers by means of the Instructions to Facilitate Voting by Citizens With Disability as well as a number of assessment questions, which could be included in the observation checklist.

The project also profited from participation by those in charge of civil society organization, as well as professionals working at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Family, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports.

Project implementation was made possible by selecting persons who in their roles as guides and facilitators made an altruistic effort in support of vulnerable population groups.

The professionals involved normally perform functions that benefit boys, girls, adolescents, youth and the adult population with a disability.

The following table shows the relation between the 1,137 polling centers with their 1,121 facilitators and 1,575 guides on voter lists by location in the field:



Table 4: Number of SOLIDEZ Facilitators and voter list Guides by municipality and polling centers

MUNICIPALITY	POLLING CENTERS	FACILITATORS	GUIDES
Juigalpa	41	41	41
Santo Tomás	11	11	11
El Rama	8	8	8
Nueva Guinea	10	10	10
Boaco	16	16	16
Estelí	47	47	47
Somoto	11		
Ocotal	40	40	40
Dipilto	5	5	5
Mozonte	3	3	3
Ciudad Antigua	1	1	1
Masaya	39	39	39
Nindirí	21	21	21
Jinotepe	17	17	17
San Marcos	9	9	9
Santa Teresa	4	4	4
Diriamba	17	15	15
Granada	49	49	49
Diriá	6	6	6
Diriomo	5	5	5
Nandaime	10	10	10
Rivas	22	22	22
Belén	3	3	3
Matagalpa	21	19	14
Waslala	21	21	21
La Dalia	7	7	7
Ciudad Sandino	37	37	37
Mga. Distrito 2	53	52	104
Mga. Distrito 3	80	80	160
Mga. Distrito 4	56	56	112
Mga. Distrito 5	56	56	112
Mga. Distrito 6	98	98	196
Mateare	12	12	12
Tipitapa	50	50	50
León	80	80	160
La Paz Centro	14	14	14
Nagarote	15	15	15
Chinandega	37	37	74
El Viejo	23	23	23
Bluefields	23	23	23
Laguna de Perlas	3	3	3
Kubra Hill	1	1	1
Puerto Cabezas	17	17	17
Siuna	11	11	11
San Carlos	3	3	3
Jinotega	24	24	24



Other essential project components were the preparation of inventories of polling stations with access problems and/or deficient lighting, as well as the gathering of data on the prevalence of the various types of disabilities in the different departments and municipalities of Nicaragua.

D) The Electoral Law and the voting rights of persons with a disability

According to article 119 of the Nicaraguan Electoral Law, persons with a physical impediment can be accompanied by a person they trust in order to exercise their right to vote. Thus the CSE prepared a instruction guides on the ways in which voting for persons with a disability can be facilitated as well as how information on voter list should be handled by facilitators and guides.

See picture 2: Frontcover of the Working handbook for polling station worker

The project's success rested on a combination of factors: the good will of the civil society organizations that work with the various CSE structures and election officials, such as the Supreme Electoral Council, the Departmental and Municipal Electoral Councils (CED and CEM), the polling stations and voting tables, as well as the enthusiasm shown by the working groups organized by the SOLIDEZ Foundation and the collaboration forthcoming on the part of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Family.

See picture 3: Facilitators of the SOLIDEZ Foundation on election day



II. PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: ACCESS INVENTORY, RAMPS, LIGHTING

For the purpose of promoting, ensuring and facilitating the exercise of voting rights on the part of the population with a disability during the 2006 Nicaraguan elections, a needs analysis was carried out of physical conditions prevailing at each of the selected polling centers. The diagnostic aimed at determining conditions regarding:

- a) access;
- b) lighting;
- c) interior physical conditions (tables, chairs, boxes, etc.); and floor conditions.

See picture 4: A man on a wheelchair at the entrance of a school chosen as a Voting Center

A) ACCESS TO POLLING STATIONS

Table 5: Number of polling centers, inaccessible centers, and ramps built

DEPARTMENT	POLLING CENTERS	INACCESSIBLE POLLING CENTERS	RAMPS BUILT
Juigalpa	44	22	12
Estelí	47	13	-
Chinandega	37	3	13
Jinotepe	18	4	8
Boaco	14	7	7
Ocotal	26	17	28
Matagalpa	73	8	8
Granada	49	13	30
Rivas	22	7	-
Masaya	33	21	
C. Sandino	37	18	25
Mga. District 2	53	11	20
Mga. District 3	80	18	
Mga. District 4	56	0	-
Mga. District 5	56		
Mga. District 6	98	47	27
León	89	33	35
TOTAL		247	213

Regarding access to polling stations and voting tables the overall results of the needs analysis carried out by the SOLIDEZ Foundation indicated that 47% had some type of constraint regarding access. For illustrative purposes, the various reasons are displayed in the table showing results for some of the



municipalities in the departments of Matagalpa and Jinotega that were visited by the technical team of the AB Consulting firm, which worked for IFES during the electoral process.

Table 6: Problems regarding access at different polling centers

Municipality	Polling Center	Situation
San Ramón	0020	This polling station is an institute in the urban periphery of the village. It is located at 700 meters from the highway and has the following limitations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no electricity; - stony road makes access difficult for the elderly or persons using wheelchairs, walking sticks or crutches; and - the main entrance has steep steps
El Tuma - La Dalia	001	No ramps. However, with help access is possible.
El Cuá	001	The voting tables at the polling stations have no ramps. However, the municipal CSE delegate indicated a community support group would be present and facilitate access to the elderly or persons with disability.
Wiwilí	001	The sidewalks of the school that serves as a polling station on election day are wide, but are difficult to transit for persons in wheelchairs who wish to access a voting table.
La Concordia	020	The school that serves as a polling station on election day has steep steps that make access difficult for persons in wheelchairs.
Jinotega	002	There is no ramp leading from the sidewalk to the corridor where the voting tables are set up. An approximately 10-inch difference in level makes access difficult.
Matagalpa	011	There is no ramp and the steps are very steep.
San Nicolás	0011	There is no ramp leading from the street to the sidewalk.
Esquipulas	004	Steep steps make access difficult for persons in wheelchairs.

B) BUILDING OF RAMPS

The existence of polling centers and voting tables with access



owners in each community, who were contracted to build mobile ramps. Priorities were established based on the degree of difficulty and available resources.

See picture 5: Workers engaging in the building of a ramp

León and Granada are colonial cities whose unique architecture is such that often there are steps leading into roofed areas and interior spaces in general. Thus it was in León and Granada that the polling centers and voting tables required the highest number of mobile ramps.

See picture 6: Woman voter on a wheelchair being assisted on a ramp

A total of 247 ramps were deemed necessary, of which 213 were built. Thus 86.3% of the original proposal for mobile ramps was covered. The remaining could not be built due to time and resource shortages.

Ramps needed	Ramps built	Deficit
247	213	34

C) LIGHTING

The needs analysis also reflected information on the state of the electrical systems at the polling stations. It was found that 11.6% lacked proper lighting (dark rooms, lack of light bulbs). These situations would represent a serious obstacle not only for persons with a disability but to the voting public at large.

When visiting the polling stations for diagnostic purposes, expectations were created among those in charge of these facilities, in particular at the schools entirely lacking lighting systems.

See picture 7: Inside a polling station

The table below shows the percentage of polling centers at each of the twelve departmental capitals that lack appropriate lighting.



Table 7: Needs analysis of polling centers with lighting problems

DEPARTMENT	SELECTED POLLING CENTERS	POLLING CENTERS WITHOUT LIGHTING
Juigalpa	44	8
Estelí	47	5
Chinandega	37	-
Jinotepe	18	-
Boaco	14	5
Ocotal	26	8
Matagalpa	73	1
Granada	49	3
Rivas	22	-
Masaya	33	8
Managua	380	21
León	89	3



III. SELECTION AND TRAINING

In an effort to provide the technical support necessary to comply with the project's stated purpose of facilitating voting by citizens with a disability IFES-Nicaragua and the SOLIDEZ Foundation worked to:

- a) Awaken interest among potential project collaborators;
- b) Exert a positive influence on the various communities regarding how people think about the disabled; and
- c) Make available all information regarding the scope of the project.

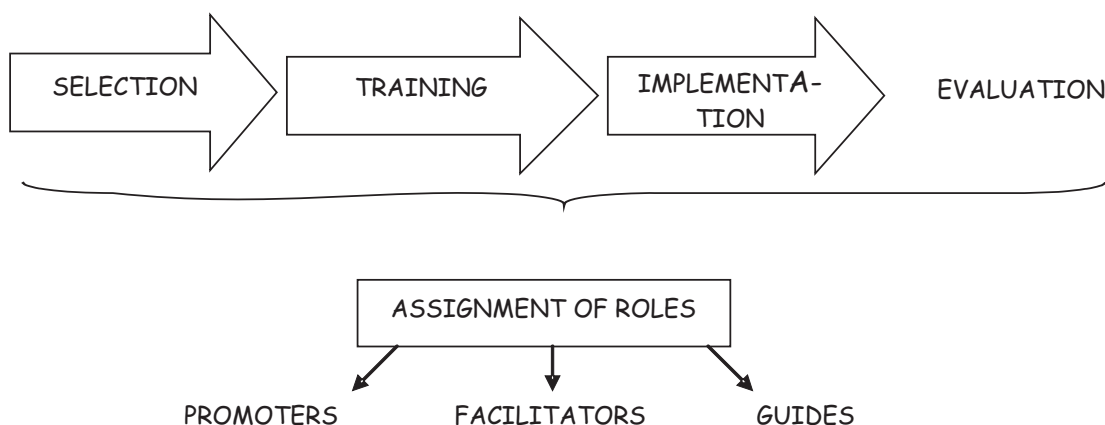
A variety of means were used to disseminate information leading to the selection and training of project staff, as follows:

- a) Arousing interest among the population;
- b) Motivating actors in the process; and
- c) Getting people to participate and thus ensure the project's success.

A) STAFF SELECTION

Considering the need to have available the human resources required to implement the project, the first step was to select staff with which to ensure that the tasks foreseen in the timetable were carried out, as follows:

Figure 2: Sequence of functions with personnel





The process of training and selecting promoters was channeled through the leaders of organizations imbued by the project's spirit and interested in the issue of persons with a disability.

The staff selected was given the necessary guidelines regarding the functions they were to perform in the needs analysis to be carried out at the 832 polling stations.

See picture 8: A training workshop of the SOLIDEZ Foundation

Community leaders in 41 localities in the fifteen departments and two autonomous regions of Nicaragua took part in the exercise of selecting people to work with the project. Persons in charge of civil society organizations also participated, as did officials from the Ministries of Health, Education and the Family.

It should be said that in the twelve departmental capitals in which project implemented was concentrated, although as mentioned it extended to 41 localities in fifteen departments and two autonomous regions, and simultaneously with the gathering of information on access to polling centers, people were recruited to participate who for the most part were family and friends of persons with a disability and who therefore had knowledge of and showed an interest in the subject.

It should not be overlooked that most of the people called upon to carry out a role as facilitators and guides showed a high degree of willingness to participate, though they were aware that this was a donation of their time and an act of altruism intended to contribute to facilitating the voting process for citizens with a disability and the elderly on election day.

B) RELEVANT SUPPORT ACTIONS

The Supreme Electoral Council sponsored a dialogue workshop attended by eighteen organizations that work with persons that have a disability. The CSE received assistance from IFES, for the purpose of providing information about the election and the project in support of voters with a disability. The workshop took place on 21 July at the UNAN Carlos Fonseca Amador campus.

The event, organized by the SOLIDEZ Foundation, signaled the onset of a dialogue with the aforementioned organizations and their possible participation in the project. Among participating



organizations were representatives of the Nicaraguan Association of Deaf Persons, the Juigalpa Women's Organization, the Association of Disabled Persons from the Nicaraguan Resistance, Blind Persons without Borders (León) and the Center for the Promotion of Integral Health.

See picture 9: Briefing session with organizations for the disabled

The SOLIDEZ Foundation, having assumed responsibility for project implementation held work preparatory meetings in coordination with the eighteen Organizations of Women with a Disability (OMDs), who are the counterparts in the localities selected.

It is worth highlighting the impact and positive attitude shown by these organizations of persons with a disability upon hearing of the project to facilitate their voting. Also important was the support offered by the Minister of Health, as Coordinator of the National Rehabilitation Council (CONARE).

Among the several significant actions taken by the SOLIDEZ Foundation is the dissemination of the following

Press Statement Facilitating the Vote for Persons with a Disability

In Nicaragua more than 600,000 persons have some form of disability, according to the National Statistics and Census Bureau (INEC). The proportion of persons with a disability increases with age, in particular after 45 years, and affects more women (11.3%) than men (9.1%). The SOLIDEZ Foundation promotes the organization of women with a disability, including their social and economic development, as well as compliance with their human rights.

As an organization of persons with a disability the SOLIDEZ Foundation and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES-Nicaragua) have trained persons to facilitate voting for citizens with a disability on 5 November, when Nicaragua will hold national elections.

The function of a facilitator is that of assisting persons with a physical disability that makes it so they must use a wheelchair, walker or crutches, or are have a speaking, hearing, visual, functional or intellectual impairment, including Down syndrome.



"A facilitator is a citizen who is himself or herself registered to vote and has a citizen identification card or supplementary voting document", said Andrea Morales, president of the SOLIDEZ Foundation.

There are a total of 4,296 facilitators nationwide, who will be distributed to all polling centers. They will carry a card identifying them as such, and wear a white T-shirt and baseball cap, both with the inscription "SOLIDEZ, VOTING FOR THE DISABLED."

The process to be followed on voting day was explained as follows by María Félix Herrera, executive director of the SOLIDEZ Foundation: "The facilitator will be in charge of receiving persons with a disability at the entrance to the polling center. In coordination with the guides they will help to find their names on the voter registration list and will lead them to the door of the room in which their voting table is located. The election stewards will give priority to persons with a disability. Once they have voted, the facilitator will accompany them back out to the exit from the polling center."

It should be pointed out that persons with a disability may also be accompanied to the polling center by a family member or other trusted person, as provided in article 119 of the Electoral Law: "Those persons having a physical impediment may be accompanied by a person whom they trust in order to exercise their right to vote. Should the physical impediment affect their arms or hands, the indelible ink shall be applied to any other visible part of the body. This procedure shall be reported in the closing certificate for that voting table."

The SOLIDEZ Foundation, IFES-Nicaragua, the National Rehabilitation Council (CONARE) and the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) call upon persons with a disability to exercise their right to vote. They likewise call upon families and friends to encourage and promote voting by persons with a disability in the national elections to be held on 5 November.

Your vote counts, your vote decides!

NP012506 (AILR)

For greater information:

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E-mail: solidez@ibw.com.ni

Pte. El Edén 1 cuadra abajo $\frac{1}{2}$ al lago



See Picture 10: Press conference on October, 25

Another important event in support of the project was the press conference presided by Mr. Adonai Jimenez (Director General of Electoral Affairs at the CSE), Mrs. Maria Félix Herrera (Director, SOLIDEZ Foundation), Mr. Rafael López Pintor, (Director, IFES-Nicaragua), and Dr. Guillermo Gosebruch (Executive Secretary, National Rehabilitation Council). The press conference aroused considerable interest among the media, and was covered by four television stations, both newspapers and two radio stations. It likewise generated space for disseminating the project on TV and radio, as well as participation in a debate forum.

C. TRAINING

The first link in the training process was to provide attention to the thirty local promoters that were selected to gather information. Requirements for selection were as follows:

- Preferably have a minor disability
- Have at least a third year High School education
- Immediately available
- Experience in the sector of persons with a disability
- Be a fluid communicator
- Able to work with e-mail
- Experience in preparing activities reports

The SOLIDEZ Foundation organized and implemented the training of promoters, thus meeting the following objective:

Provide local promoters with the necessary tools to identify architectural and other barriers that limit voting by persons with a disability in the 2006 Nicaraguan national elections.

The contents of the training workshops were as follows:

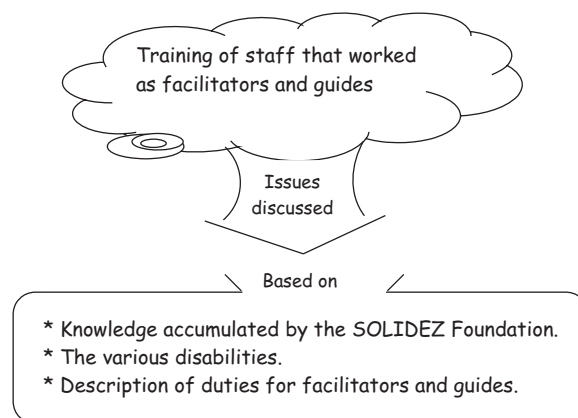
- a) Overview of disabilities
- b) Architectural barriers
- c) Urban development barriers



- d) Proposals for how to overcome barriers
- e) Duration of information gathering survey
- f) Levels of organization and communication for delivery of the needs analysis.

The thirty promoters were trained to carry out the following activities:

- a) Conduct the survey of access to polling stations, using the Access to Polling Stations Form.
- b) Supervise the information-gathering process at the polling stations and suggest the building of mobile ramps (if required).
- c) Accompany the local organization when building the access ramp to the polling station.



The training was provided by eight professionals from the SOLIDEZ Foundation.

Once the various stages of support staff training were completed at operational level, and the role of the thirty promoters, facilitators and alternate guides were defined, efforts concentrated on management, coordination and implementation.

Training methodology

The training workshops for facilitators and guides were organized into working groups for the purpose of discussing strategies and carrying out practical exercises. These were followed by plenary sessions at which doubts and concerns could be voiced.

One important factor in the training was that the staff at all times displayed great willingness to implement the project. When the



workshop concluded, participants were allowed to choose the role they wanted to play. Once again, their enthusiasm was evident.

The facilitator's job was significantly enhanced by the *Guide of Instructions to Facilitate Voting by Persons with a Disability*, which was published by the Supreme Electoral Council. The Handbook is divided into three main sections, as follows:

1. The mandate and legal compliance.
2. The facilitator's functions.
3. The facilitator's obligations.

Here are some picks from the **Guide of Instructions to Facilitate Voting by Persons with a Disability**, the full content of which can be found in Spanish at the appended Photo Section

See picture 11: *Guide for Facilitators of the Vote of the Disabled*

...

6. The facilitator shall conduct the necessary negotiations with the president of the voting table if persons with a disability are registered to vote at said table and it is located on the second floor, or is otherwise difficult to access. The aim is always to facilitate voting.
7. It must always be kept in mind that article 119 of the Electoral Law allows persons with disabilities to exercise their right to vote accompanied by a person they trust.
8. The permanent facilitator shall respectfully ask other citizens standing in line to show understanding and a spirit of collaboration by assisting persons with a disability, thus facilitating access.
9. Persons with a disability and who use wheelchairs or crutches, or who have hearing or visual impairments, have Down syndrome, are elderly or have any type of disability or impairment shall be granted priority in voter lines.

...

Statistics

The following data reflect information regarding the training process and are shown in their respective diagram. Activities took place in 37 cities and towns in fifteen departments in Nicaragua and its two autonomous regions, RAAN and RAAS.

Table 8: *Statistics of municipalities, voting centers and trained personnel in support of the disabled*

Concept	Quantity
Municipalities in the 15 departments and 2 autonomous regions	41
Facilitators trained	1,121
Guides trained	1,575
Polling stations covered	1,137



**IV.
ELECTION
DAY:
NOVEMBER 5,
2006**

The project's main goal was to facilitate voting by the population with a disability. There follows a description of the experience, which can and should be used for the purpose of strengthening future plans and actions to be undertaken in support of getting out the vote among persons with a disability, not only in Nicaraguan national and municipal elections, but in other countries wishing to emulate the experience.

Before discussing the project and its results on election day it is worth pointing out that the achievements represent the sum total of results obtained throughout the process, including election, training, needs analysis and implementation of activities with the support of NGOs, state ministries (Health, Education, Family) and the governing body of the election process, the Supreme Electoral Council.

A) PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The dissemination methods and briefing seminars for the various organizations allowed for raising awareness and taking ownership of the conceptual and institutional framework of the election process and the election timetable. Of particular interest was the establishment of a frank dialogue with and between citizens that have a disability, as this undoubtedly gave rise to nationwide project coverage.

The participation by the different organizations of disabled persons in the 41 selected municipalities was also very important. The presence of civil society organizations in the election process is reflected in the table 9.

Such a degree of participation by a vulnerable sector of society is unprecedented in Nicaragua.

B) ELECTION DAY

The support teams to get out the vote of persons with a disability were organized and trained by the SOLIDEZ Foundation with the sponsorship and support of the CSE. These teams were established in each of the selected municipalities. Each team member was given identification material provided by the SOLIDEZ Foundation (t-shirts and baseball caps plus a Guide of Instructions).

The attention provided to persons with a disability was also



Table 9: Coverage of localities to ensure access to voting by persons with a disability

DEPARTAMENTOS	MUNICIPALITIES	ORGANIZATIONS
Juigalpa	4	Organization of Women w/ a Disability Civil society collaborators
Estelí	1	Organization of Women w/ a Disability Handicap-Estelí
Chinandega	2	Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Carazo	4	Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Boaco	1	Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Ocotal	4	Organization of Women w/ a Disability Civil society collaborators
Matagalpa	3	Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Jinotega	1	Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Granada	4	Organization of Women w/ a Disability Civil society collaborators
Rivas	2	Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Masaya	2	"La Luz" Organization of Women w/ a Disability
Managua	4	Community grassroots organization Civil society collaborators Ciudad Sandino Organization of Women w/ a Disability
León	3	Center for Integral Promotion, León
Bluefields	3	Civil society collaborators
Puerto Cabezas	2	Civil society collaborators
Río San Juan	1	Civil society collaborators

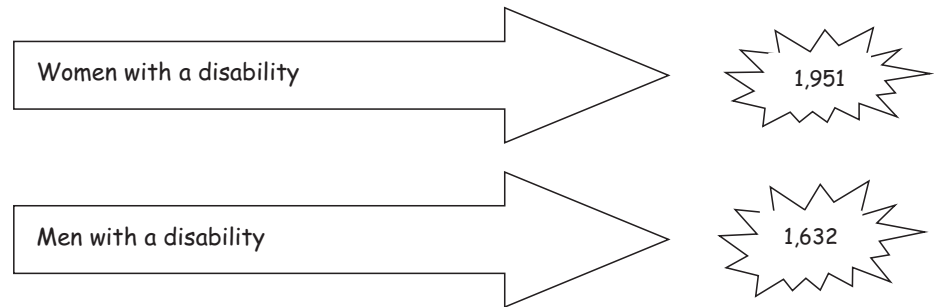
Total Municipalities Covered 41

extended to pregnant women, women accompanied by children, the elderly and persons with chronic diseases. This was under directives given on the voting handbook Paso a Paso as well as at the training workshops for poll workers, facilitators and guides on voter lists.



The total number of persons attended to directly by facilitators at the polling centers is partially illustrated in the figure below. The data belong to a limited number of municipalities.

Figure 3: Number of disabled persons who received direct assistance



As an illustration, there follows a breakdown of the number of persons receiving attention at the polling centers, based on gender and their disability. The data belong to 11 municipalities where it was possible collecting information from all the disabled persons who were assisted.

See picture 12: Blind girl being led toward a polling station

The information provided above is partial, as it refers only to the eleven municipalities from which complete data was received. However, the number of persons attended to at these polling stations allows for an extrapolation that indicates that tens of thousands of persons with a disability were assisted nationwide.

Based on the partial report the quantitative information is as follows:

Figure 4: Number of people receiving assistance according to type of disability

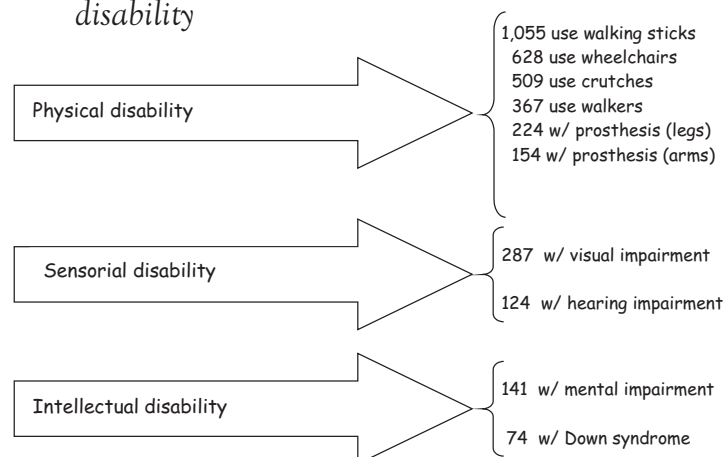




Table 10: Persons attended at the polling stations, based on their disability:

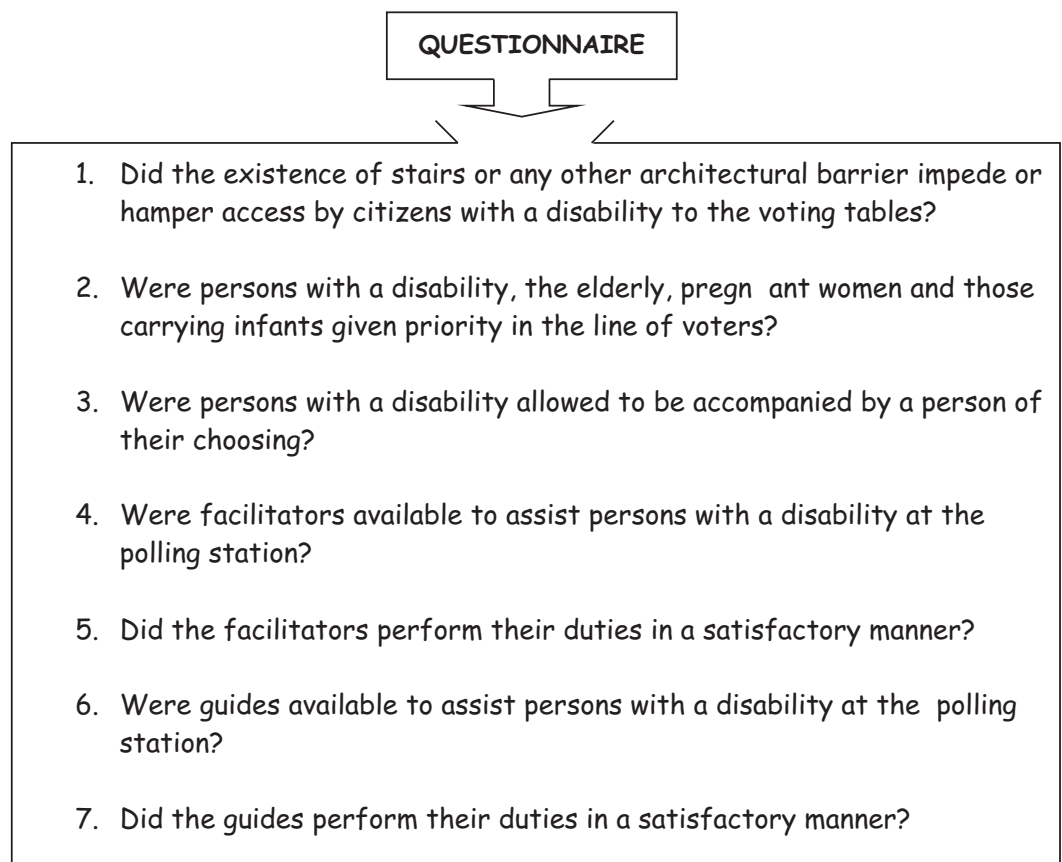
LOCATION	SEX		TYPE OF DISABILITY																
	Male	Fem.	Phisical							Sensorial							Intellectual		
			Wheel-chair	Walkers	Crutches	Walking Stick	Prosthesis (Arms)	Prosthesis (Legs)	Blind	Hearing	Mental	Syndrome Down	Disab. Múltiple						
Nindirí	122	146	36	17	23	84	14	17	32	11	8	6	20						
Masaya	275	302	109	72	80	157	20	32	47	20	20	5	15						
Waslala			18		31	20	9		8	1		1	1						
La Paz Centro	106	109	34	22	15	64	7	17	7	10	21	6	12						
Chinandega	180	230	83	45	58	124	14	30	21	2	10	6	17						
León	236	267	102	65	53	168	5	32	34	10	11	14	9						
Boaco	85	88	23	15	30	63	7	4	12	7	6	5	1						
Nagarote	88	124	27	37	15	54	10	9	24	13	13	8	2						
Santo Tomás	50	56	12	3	14	21	4	8	23	5	7	5	4						
El Viejo	144	186	36	27	42	99	20	37	32	6	15	7	9						
Ocotal	80	164	44	13	35	46	13	23	24	13	15	5	13						
Managua D. III	266	279	104	51	113	155	31	15	23	26	15	6	6						
TOTAL	1632	1951	628	367	509	1055	154	224	287	124	141	74	109						



This information also allows for evaluating the special motivation among facilitators and guides, to which must be added the tremendous satisfaction felt by the population of persons with a disability, who saw their needs being attended to.

C) ASSESSMENT BY ELECTORAL OBSERVERS

With the aim of gathering assessments of the project's achievements made by external sources, a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to election observer missions.



This questionnaire was made available to the election observation missions, with a view toward having them include it in their reports, partially or in its entirety. Unfortunately, the level of awareness regarding the voting rights of persons with a disability was very low among most missions observing the 2006 Nicaragua national elections. Only two of them, the European Union and the Government of Spain, used partly the form.

The assessment of these two missions regarding the exercise of voting rights by persons with a disability was as follows:



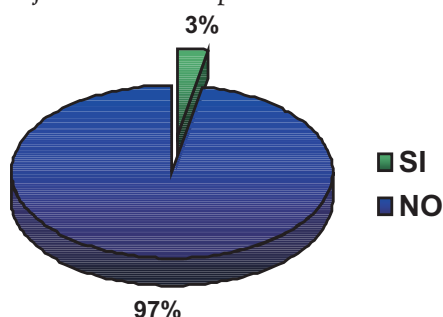
1. European Union Election Observation Mission

The European Union Election Observation Mission was formed by 150 observers visiting almost one thousand polling stations on elections day. The following question was included in their observation checklist:

- Have you observed any case in which the procedure for voting by persons with a disability was not applied correctly?

A full 97% of observers declared replied that the procedures were applied correctly, with only 3% responding negatively.

Figure 5: Results from the European Union Observer Mission



It should be mentioned the percentages were calculated on 100% of applicable cases, and did not take into account those cases which, for different reasons, were not applicable, for instance:

- Voter registration list guides were present only at urban polling stations.
- No voter with a disability was present during election observation activities.

2. Spanish Government Electoral Observation Mission

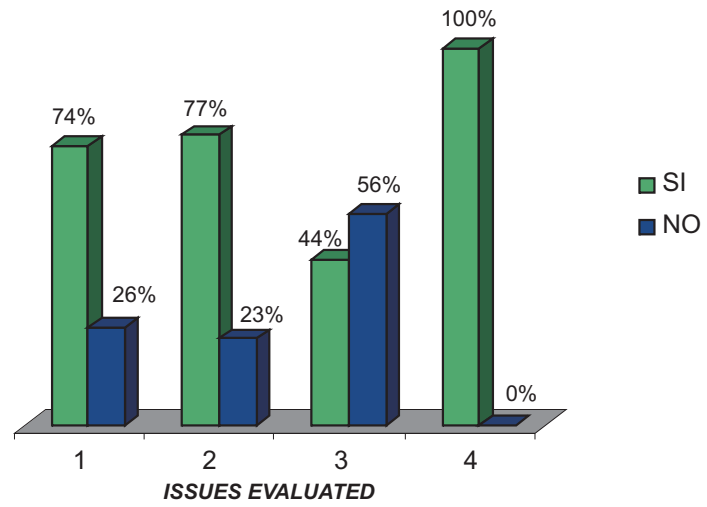
This was a relatively small mission, consisting of twelve observers. They visited 78 polling centers (over one hundred polling stations) in urban and rural areas. There follows a table depicting the outcome of their observations.

Table 11: Assessment results from observers of the Spanish Government

ISSUES EVALUATED		YES	NO
1	Active presence of voter registration list guides	74%	26%
2	Persons with a disability were given priority in voter lines	77%	23%
3	Vote facilitator was present to assist persons with a disability	44%	56%
4	Access allowed those accompanying a person with a disability	100%	0%



Figure 6: Assessment results from observers of the Spanish Government



The graph above shows the prevalence of high positive percentages for each of the aspects evaluated. This demonstrates, in good measure, the benefits allowed persons with a disability through implementation of the project in support for voting by citizens with a disability.

See picture 13: Old lady being assisted by Facilitators



V. **PROJECT** **EVALUATION**

The decision to evaluate an activity after having implemented it implies a review of both achievements and challenges, as well as identifying the strengths and weaknesses encountered. Taking these into account will contribute to taking better decisions in the future.

In this case, future elections in Nicaragua or elsewhere now have available a set of indicators that ensure the effective participation and exercise of voting rights of the most vulnerable segment of the population, namely persons with a disability, the elderly, pregnant women and those with a chronic illness.

See picture 14: SOLIDEZ management team with promoters

In order to gain a more precise insight to the project's results, an Assessment Workshop was held with promoters and SOLIDEZ Foundation staff from 20 to 22 November 2006 at the Montelimar beach resort. Some valuable elements from the proceedings of the workshop can be used to better understand the Nicaraguan experience in support of voting by persons with a disability.

See picture 15: Project assessment workshop on November 20-22

The meeting was planned and implemented with financing from IFES-Nicaragua. The SOLIDEZ Foundation was charged with organizing and holding the event, under the leadership of Ms. María Félix Herrera, its executive director, and Mr. Rafael López Pintor, the IFES-Nicaragua representative.

There follows a description of the main objectives:

Overall Objective

To assess the impact generated by the implementation of the project in support of voting by persons with a disability during the national elections held on 5 November 2006 in Nicaragua.

Specific objectives

- a. To identify both facilitating and obstructing factors in project implementation.
- b. Identify the successful activities leading to the exercise of the right to vote on the part of persons with a disability.
- c. Prepare future activities required to make voting more accessible to persons with a disability.



The following Work Guide was prepared with a view toward enriching the conclusions arrived at by participating promoters (See Work Guide No.2 including several assessment documents used at Montelimar workshop).

WORK GUIDE

1. How did your organization become involved in the project and what motivated you to participate?
2. Describe the dissemination work or any other activities undertaken for the purpose of recruiting promoters, facilitators and guides.
3. Assess the process of coordination with the implementing entity, the recruited staff, members of your organization and institutions in your locality.

Organizational aspects:

- ◆ Internal / external communications strategies
 - ◆ Coordination
 - ◆ Financial aspects (mobilization, sending of documentation, follow-up).
4. What were the most relevant aspects that influenced the attention provided at your locality and how was it perceived by
 - a. Persons with a disability
 - b. Family members of persons with a disability
 - c. Public at large
 - d. Communications media
 - e. Staff participating as facilitators and guides
 - f. Members of the Supreme Electoral Council
 - g. Members of the voting tables
 - h. Representatives of the political parties
 - i. Election observer missions



VI. **ACHIEVEMENTS** **AND** **CHALLENGES**

Regarding pertinent achievements and challenges the various groups at the meeting expressed opinions that may serve as points of reference for future electoral processes. They are listed below with no particular order of importance

A) ACHIEVEMENTS

A list of the more relevant achievements is deployed below without any priority order, which may be used as a reference for future activities:

- The high degree of participation by persons with a disability illustrates the project's relevance.
- The role played by the SOLIDEZ Foundation in its accompaniment of the various organizations of persons with a disability nationwide must be considered key in the recruitment and training of facilitators and guides.
- The notable degree of interest displayed by those in charge of the schools at which the voting tables were located greatly facilitated obtaining the information required by those charged with preparing the needs assessments, as well as the building and installation of mobile access ramps. A collateral outcome was that valuable information was gathered from educational authorities regarding physical infrastructure conditions, including furniture and lighting, at the schools.
- The establishment and activation of an efficient training network put to the test the coordinating capacity of IFES-Nicaragua, the SOLIDEZ Foundation, the CSE, state agencies and the organisations of persons with a disability and left behind a sufficiently trained and motivated support staff that did outstanding humanitarian and altruistic work.
- IFES-Nicaragua, the SOLIDEZ Foundation, the CSE, state agencies and the organisations of persons with a disability displayed the capacity to carry out a widespread dissemination campaign that was crucial to the motivation felt by voters with a disability.
- The information gathered regarding physical conditions at the polling stations will be taken into account by the National Rehabilitation Council (CONARE), pending the possibility of planning the construction of permanent physical works.



- A project subproduct was the degree of coordination achieved between project leaders and the local carpentry workshops as concerns arrangements for the building of the mobile ramps required according to the needs analysis carried out. This generated temporary employment and income for many families.

See picture 16: Volunteers mobilizing in support of the project

Overall, it is clear that the project generated a considerable amount of valuable information and thus a solid foundation, based upon which similar experiences can be replicated in Nicaragua or other countries.

B) CHALLENGES

When reference is made to challenges faced during the implementation of a project such as this one, it must be assumed that the ultimate usefulness of identifying these is to convert them to lessons learned that can be used in any future similar projects.

There follows a list of the most relevant challenges faced during the Nicaraguan experience in contributing to the exercise of voting rights by persons with a disability.

- At five private schools selected as polling stations, the directors did not allow access for carrying out the needs analysis.
- In some localities in Juigalpa and Estelí the persons who had been recruited discontinued their participation, because having been trained as facilitators or guides, the political parties offered them better economic incentives to work as poll watchers at the voting tables.
- On election day, in a good number of localities, the voter list guides selected by the Municipal Electoral Councils and stationed at the entrance of voting centers had received no training regarding their functions. This led to problems with SOLIDEZ Foundation staff that were doing their work as stipulated.
- There were problems with payment of the guides, due to lack of coordination with those in charge at municipal level. These



adopted a negative attitude, although they had been asked earlier to submit an official list of guides. When time came to pay the staff, it was uncertain how many persons had actually worked at each polling station.

- At some moments there was difficulty coordinating efforts with the CSE at national level. This led to a barrier that partially limited coordination at operational level with other election officials.
- In Managua some guides only received their accreditation at the end of election day, leading to a situation in which six or more guides were to be found at a single polling station.



VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEN- DATIONS

A) CONCLUSIONS

Using the Work Guide, the groups at the workshop prepared a list of conclusions, a summary of which follows in no particular order of importance.

1. Persons with a disability were motivated to participate in the project, thus achieving a considerable degree of advocacy at the national elections.
2. When training poll watchers, the Supreme Electoral Council included the issue of support to voters with a disability by means of work done by:
 - Promoters
 - Facilitators and
 - Guides on voter lists.
3. Coordination and communication between the implementing agency, the staff recruited, members of organisations of persons with a disability and the institutions involved was considered to be:
 - Excellent as regards coordination;
 - Very good as concerns communication mechanisms;
 - Marred somewhat by delays in payment, as there were budget constraints for the per diems.
4. Project dissemination work undertaken by the SOLIDEZ Foundation and its presence at the polling centers were factors that motivated persons with a disability and their families to vote.
5. It may also be concluded that this experience has demonstrated that the population at large, organisations, agencies and electoral institutions can contribute to achieving:
 - Opportunities for persons with a disability to exercise their right to vote;
 - Respect for the rights of citizens to vote by overcoming barriers imposed by a disability; and
 - A distribution of information among the population regarding how best to assist persons with a disability to exercise their right to vote.



6. By implementing the project in support for voting by citizens with a disability the following has been achieved:
 - Reinforcement of the possibility that persons with a disability can exercise their right to vote.
 - Learning the important lesson that the joining of efforts by different segments of society can contribute to compliance with that which is set forth in the Law No. 202 from 2004 on "Prevention, Rehabilitation and Leveling of Opportunities for Persons with a Disability" as well as in Article 119 of the Electoral Law providing that:

"Persons with physical impairment could be accompanied by a person of their choice for exercising their right to vote. This shall be recorded in the appropriate form.

When the physical impairment exists on the hands or arms, inking with indelible ink shall be done in any visible part of the body. This shall be recorded in the appropriate form"
7. As a final conclusion, it may be stated that this experience demonstrated that the existing gap regarding treatment and equal opportunity for the population with disabilities can be significantly reduced through real commitments made and implemented by national institutions, civil society organisations and society at large.

B) RECOMMENDATIONS

For the benefit of future similar activities, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Capitalize the experience gained through the implementation of the project by adding to the formulation of similar programs in which persons with a disability are taken into account and access is guaranteed in the fields of educational, productive and recreational activities.
2. Improve planning, in particular as concerns providing a detailed description of activities, responsibilities and coordination that ensure harmonious participation on the part of all actors committed to the project.
3. Propitiate that organizations and association that work for and with persons that have a disability are placed as trainers and



information liaisons between the Supreme Electoral Council and public and private institutions that play a role in electoral processes.

4. Inform persons with a disability, their families and their representatives of their universal right to elect and be elected.
5. Prepare Voting Regulations for persons with a disability, describing procedures and the facilities necessary for this segment of the population to exercise its right to vote.
6. Propose methods and strategies that commit party leaders and legally constituted political parties to ensure adequate treatment to persons with a disability.
7. Promote coordination with the Supreme Electoral Council with a view toward having the SOLIDEZ Foundation train voter list guides.
8. Train the recruited staff, always keeping in mind their characteristics (languages and customs) and possible sensorial limitations (visual, speaking and hearing impairments).
9. To advocate for the development of a Web page, friendly to the disable through a special design, to be used by all relevant public and private organizations (See specific guidelines in ANNEX).





ANNEX





A GUIDE ON INTERNET ACCESS BY THE DISABLED WEB CONTENT ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

The use of a special Web page or of a special component within a standard Web page has become increasingly frequent for the purpose of facilitating its use by people with a disability. The following guidelines are intended to serve such a purpose by illustrating the basic elements of such a page. A more detailed presentation of the topic in all its technical complexity would not fit into a publication such as this one. Our only aim is to recommend that the subject be taken into account by those interested, as well to describe its main components. People with a special interest are encouraged to consult with the following source:

<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT>

Guideline 1. Provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.

Provide contents that, when made available to the user, conveys essentially the same function or purpose as auditory or visual content.

Guideline 2. Don't rely on color alone.

Ensure that text and graphics are understandable when viewed without color.

Guideline 3. Use markup and style sheets and do so properly.

Mark up documents with the proper structural elements. Control presentation with style sheets rather than with presentation of elements and attributes.

Guideline 4. Clarify natural language usage.

Use markup that facilitates pronunciation or interpretation of abbreviated or foreign text.

Guideline 5. Create tables that transform gracefully.

Ensure that tables have necessary markup to be transformed by accessible browsers and other user agents.

Guideline 6. Ensure that pages featuring new technologies transform gracefully.

Ensure that pages are accessible even when newer technologies are not supported or are turned off.

Guideline 7. Ensure user control of time-sensitive content changes.

Ensure that moving, blinking, scrolling, or auto-updating objects or



pages may be paused or stopped.

Guideline 8. Ensure direct accessibility of embedded user interfaces.

Ensure that the user interface follows principles of accessible design: device-independent access to functionality, keyboard operability, self-voicing, etc.

Guideline 9. Design for device-independence.

Use features that enable activation of page elements via a variety of input devices.

Guideline 10. Use interim solutions.

Use interim accessibility solutions so that assistive technologies and older browsers will operate correctly.

Guideline 11. Use W3C technologies and guidelines.

Use W3C technologies (according to specification) and follow accessibility guidelines. Where it is not possible to use a W3C technology, or doing so results in material that does not transform gracefully, provide an alternative version of the content that is accessible.

Guideline 12. Provide context and orientation information.

Provide context and orientation information to help users understand complex pages or elements.

Guideline 13. Provide clear navigation mechanisms.

Provide clear and consistent navigation mechanisms -- orientation information, navigation bars, a site map, etc. -- to increase the likelihood that a person will find what they are looking for at a site.

Guideline 14. Ensure that documents are clear and simple.

Ensure that documents are clear and simple so they may be more easily understood.



**SOLIDEZ
FOUNDATION
WORK
MATERIALS**

WORK GUIDE No. 1

**Survey of Conditions Regarding Access to Polling Centers
IFES/SOLIDEZ Project**

Name of Polling Station No. _____

Route officer _____

Date _____

Please circle the appropriate option on the list. If necessary, take measurements or make notes, as suggested.

Immediate setting: street leading to the polling center or the point of access.

Sidewalks in good condition

Sidewalks in poor condition or with obstacles

Sidewalks nonexistent

Dirt road in poor condition

Other

Access or Main Gate (Pedestrians)

Main gate is accessible

Gate is narrow (measure width)

Steps at the doors (measure height and count number of steps)

Any other obstacles (describe)

External circulation (sidewalks leading to classrooms or other buildings)

Sidewalks are more than 90 cm wide

Sidewalks are narrow (measure width)

Sidewalks nonexistent (dirt road)

Sidewalks with steps (measure height and number of steps)

Any other obstacles on sidewalks (describe)

Internal circulation (Corridors leading to classrooms / different areas)

Corridors are more than 90 cm wide

Corridors are narrow (measure width)

Corridors are in poor condition (measure area)

Corridors have steps (measure height and number of steps)

Any other obstacles regarding corridors (describe)

Classrooms / Settings in general

Access door is more than 90 cm wide

Access door is narrow (measure width)

Floors are in poor condition (measure area)

Floor is slippery



Lighting in the classrooms / General setting

Well lit

Too dark

Floor color

Wall color

Roof or ceiling color

Light bulbs not functioning (how many)

Electrical problems (specify)

Miscellaneous

Check the existing furniture and the location of ballot boxes, bureaus, tables or desks.

Is the furniture is in good, average or poor condition?

Does the polling station have only one floor? If it has several floors, how many are there?

If the polling center has several storeys, what conditions are the stairways in? Check the steps, handrails and floor.



ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

1. In general terms the **Polling Center** is located in a place that is accessible to the elderly or persons with a disability.

2. The width of the door leading to the room in which the **Voting Tables** are located allow for entry by persons using a wheelchair.

3. The **Polling Center** has access ramps for persons using a wheelchair.

4. **The** room in which the **Voting Tables** are located at the **Polling Center** has access ramps.

Brief qualitative evaluation by Route Officer.

Municipality: _____

Voting Table No.: _____

Route Officer signature: _____



WORK GUIDE No. 2

Analysis of the proposals put forth by the groups

Proposed Activities	Key Actors	Expected Impact	Key Assumption for Success

WORK PLAN TO BE PROMOTED

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME	LEAD ENTITIES	RESOURCES	REMARKS



Preparation of the Work Plan

GROUP 1

Members:

Ada Haslam

Marisol Guzmán

Danelia Mendieta

Silvia Palacios

Sandra Darce

Proposed Activities	Key Actors	Expected Impact	Key Assumption
Improve conditions at polling centers and voting tables. Make the necessary changes in those to which there is no access.	Mayor's Offices Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Ministry of Education Supreme Electoral Council (CSE)	Greater participation and ease of access.	Awareness is raised among key actors.
More publicity in the communications media.	Radio Television Newspapers Sign language interpreters Braille Individual information	The segment of persons with a disability (PWD) becomes cognizant that there are organized activities in which their rights are respected and that they can exercise their right to vote. Awareness is raised in the communities.	The communications media become involved.
Colors used on ballots are easily distinguishable.	CSE	Visually impaired persons can identify the colors used on the ballots.	Greater trust will be generated.
More facilitators and guides at polling centers with several voting tables.	IFES SOLIDEZ Foundation	Improved attention to PWD, the elderly and pregnant women.	Voting will proceed more quickly.



GROUP 2

Members:

Aleida Mendoza
 María Muñoz
 Silvia Pavón
 Hordina Rocha
 Narciso Reyes
 Juan Alonso Gaitán
 Betty Cerna González

Proposed Activities	Key Actors	Expected Impact	Key Assumption
All polling centers are checked for ease of access.	Leaders of PWD that know NTOM.	Every polling center is accessible to PWD.	Coordination with the CSE.
Relocation of polling centers to which access is difficult or impossible.	CSE Organizations of PWD.	Awareness is raised. Improved conditions for PWD.	PWD exercise their right to vote.
Reform Law 202 in order to establish mechanisms and competencies to certify that all polling centers are accessible.	Organizations of PWD. National Assembly. Population at large.	The state complies with the law.	A law is enacted that effectively guarantees access by PWD to polling centers and voting tables.

Work Plan to be promoted

Objective	Activity	Timeframe	Lead entities	Resources
Carry out a needs analysis that reflects on-the-ground conditions at polling centers.	Check ease of access at polling centers.	6 months	Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Human Economic Material
Engage the CSE in negotiations leading to the relocation of polling centers that are inaccessible.	Improvement of polling centers.	8 months	CSOs	Human Economic Material
Promote a reform of Law 202 as regards access to polling centers.	Reform to Law 202.	12 months	SOLIDEZ Foundation	Human Economic Material



GROUP 3

Members:

Martha Alina Chavez

Martha Downs

Martha López

Isabel Rivas

María Lidia

Proposed Activities	Key Actors	Expected Impact	Key Assumption
Immediately establish an office to prepare procedures for participation by PWD in future elections.	IFES SOLIDEZ Foundation	Improved organization.	Financing is available.
Coordination with the CSE.	IFES SOLIDEZ Foundation CSE	Respect. Organization. Effectiveness.	Awareness is raised.
Inform the population at large on voting by PWD in 2006.	IFES SOLIDEZ Foundation Communications Media.	Raising of awareness. Better organization.	Communications Media become involved.
Expansion to rural areas.	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES Organizations.	Greater coverage.	Financing is available and the communities are interested in participating.
Train facilitators and guides.	SOLIDEZ IFES Organizations CSE	Greater attention and capacity.	Financing is available.
Update the needs analysis on accessibility.	SOLIDEZ Organizations.	Objectivity.	There is good organization between the CSE and donors.



Work Plan to be promoted

Objective	Activity	Timeframe	Lead entities	Resources
Prepare conditions in a timely and proper fashion.	Establish a Center.	2007	Solidez IFES CSOs	Economics Human
Activities are carried out in a coordinated manner.	Coordination.	2007	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES	Economic Human
Raise awareness on the issue of PWD.	Dissemination.	2007-2008	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES	Economic Human Communications media.
Increase coverage and raise awareness regarding PWD in rural areas.	Update the needs analysis regarding accessibility.	2007-2008	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES CSOs	Economic Human
Increase training material in languages spoken by original peoples.	Training.	2007-2008	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES Organiza- tions	Economic Human Didactic Materials.
Achieve recognition and thus provide more and better assistance.	Coordination with the CSE.	2007-2008	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES CSOs	Human Economic



SOLIDEZ FOUNDATION GROUP

Proposed Activities	Key Actors	Expected Impact	Key Assumption
Prepare a Registry of Disabilities (clear and easy to understand)	Facilitators SOLIDEZ Foundation Organizations of PWD	The population increases its knowledge regarding PWD.	National election observer groups provide statistical information to PWD registered at each polling station.
Strategies are defined for disseminating the role of vote facilitators.	SOLIDEZ Foundation IFES FECONORI	Awareness is raised among the population, which supports voting by PWD.	Communications media lower costs of publishing dissemination materials.
Establish an orientation office to guide citizens on election day.	Political parties Population at large Organizations of PWD CSOs	The population is better informed on the voting process.	The CSE is willing to facilitate the process of voting and shows greater openness toward organisations working on the issue.
Publish handbooks for the design of ballots in Braille.	SOLIDEZ Foundation Supreme Electoral Council IFES Organization of Blind Persons	There is an increase in the number of blind persons who exercise their right to vote without assistance.	Technical and financial support is forthcoming from donor organizations. Exchanges are held with similar organizations in Central America (El Salvador).



**DIRECTIVE
FOR THE
APPLICATION
ART. 119 IN
THE VOTING
HANDBOOK
PASO A PASO
FOR
POLLWORKER**



...

2. ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS: (STARTS AT 7:00 A.M.)

a) Assistance priorities:

They should be given a priority in the queue of voters:

- Pregnant women or women carrying babies.
- The elder.
- People with a disability: on a wheelchair, using crutches, walking sticks, blinds, deafs, mute.

In case they have any difficulty mark the ballot paper or deposit the vote, they can be accompanied by a person of their choice.

...



SECCIÓN FOTOGRAFÍA

PHOTO
SECTION

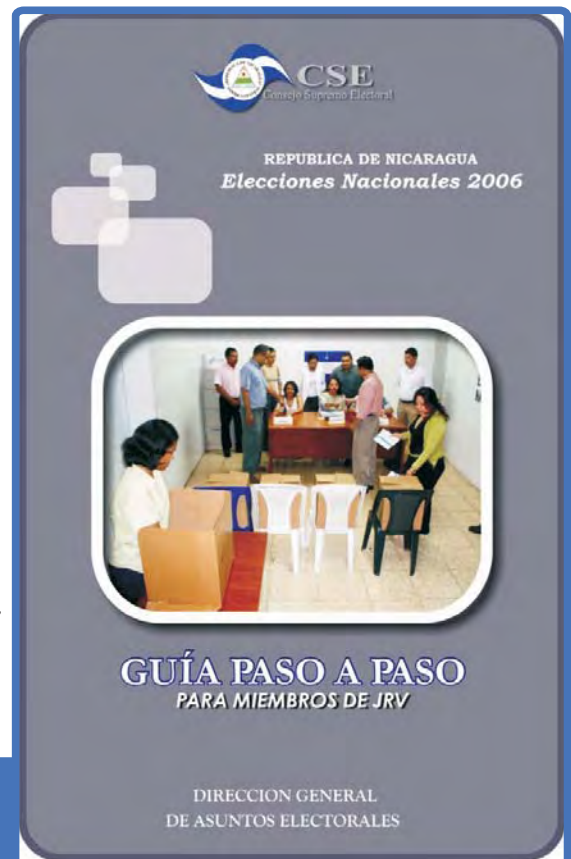




1

Marcha de asociaciones de discapacitados en Managua en vísperas de las elecciones. / Demonstration by advocate associations in Managua on the eve of elections

Portada de la Guía Paso a Paso para Miembros de JRV / Frontcover of the Working handbook for polling station worker



2



3

Facilitadores de SOLIDEZ el día de la votación. / Facilitators of the SOLIDEZ Foundation on election day.

Hombre en silla de ruedas a la entrada de una escuela elegida como centro de votación. / A man on a wheelchair at the entrance of a school chosen as a voting center.

4





5

Trabajadores preparando la construcción de una rampa. / Workers engaging in the building of a ramp.

Votante en silla de ruedas asistido sobre un rampa de acceso / Woman voter on a wheelchair being assisted on a ramp

6





7

Interior de una Junta Receptora de Votos / Inside a polling station

Un taller de capacitación de SOLIDEZ / A training workshop of the SOLIDEZ Foundation

8





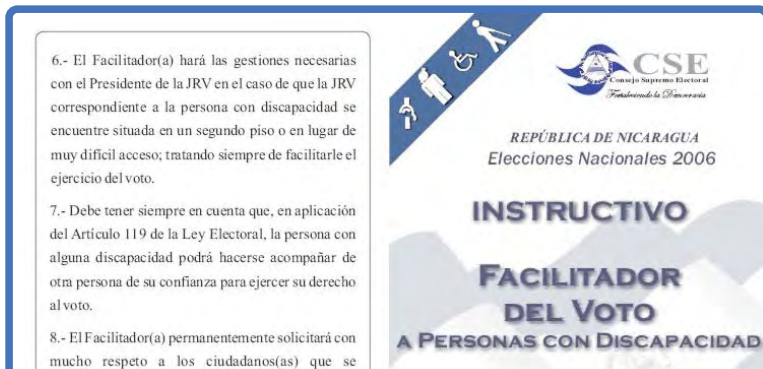
9

Sesión informativa con organizaciones de discapacitados / Briefing session with organizations for the disabled

Conferencia de prensa del 25 de octubre / Press conference on October, 25

10





6.- El Facilitador(a) hará las gestiones necesarias con el Presidente de la JRV en el caso de que la JRV correspondiente a la persona con discapacidad se encuentre situada en un segundo piso o en lugar de muy difícil acceso; tratando siempre de facilitarle el ejercicio del voto.

7.- Debe tener siempre en cuenta que, en aplicación del Artículo 119 de la Ley Electoral, la persona con alguna discapacidad podrá hacerse acompañar de otra persona de su confianza para ejercer su derecho al voto.

8.- El Facilitador(a) permanentemente solicitará con mucho respeto a los ciudadanos(as) que se encuentran en la fila, su comprensión y colaboración para el acceso de las personas con discapacidad.

9.- Las personas con alguna discapacidad: en sillas de ruedas, que utilicen muletas, sordos, mudos, síndrome de down, ancianos o cualquier otro tipo de discapacidad funcional, tendrán prioridad en la fila.

11

Instructivo Facilitador del Voto a Personas con Discapacidad./ Guide for Facilitators of the Vote of the Disabled.

MANDATO Y CUMPLIMIENTO LEGAL

1.- La Ley Electoral en su artículo 119 establece: "Las personas que tuvieren impedimento físico podrán hacerse acompañar de una persona de su confianza para ejercer su derecho al voto. Esto se hará constar en el acta respectiva... Cuando el impedimento sea de las extremidades superiores la impregnación con tinta indeleble podrá hacerse en cualquier parte visible del cuerpo, esto se hará constar en el acta respectiva".

2.- Para facilitar el cumplimiento a lo preceptuado por la Ley, la Organización de Discapacitados SOLIDEZ e IFES-NICARAGUA, han organizado que en cada Centro de Votación habrá un Facilitador(a) del voto de las personas con alguna discapacidad: personas en sillas de ruedas, que utilicen muletas, sordos, mudos, con síndrome de down, ancianos o cualquier otro tipo de discapacidad funcional.

FUNCIÓN DEL FACILITADOR (A)

3.- La persona que ejercerá esta función será un ciudadano(a) inscrito(a) en el Padrón Electoral, portador(a) de Cédula de Identidad o Documento Supletorio en vigencia, según su caso.

4.- El Facilitador(a) portará en forma visible un carnet de identificación otorgado por SOLIDEZ, una camiseta de color blanco con una leyenda a la altura del pecho y la espalda que se leerá "SOLIDEZ, VOTO DISCAPACITADOS" así como también una gorra del mismo color y leyenda.

OBLIGACIONES DEL FACILITADOR (A)

5.- El Facilitador(a) se ubicará normalmente a la entrada del Centro de Votación y realizará las tareas siguientes:

- Recibe a las personas con discapacidad en la entrada del Centro de Votación.
- Las conduce al lugar donde se exhibe el Padrón de Centro de Votación, solicita al Edecán ayuda para ubicarlo en el Padrón e identificar la Junta Receptora de Votos en la que ejercerán su derecho al voto.
- Las conduce a la fila y le solicita al Policía Electoral prioridad en la misma.
- Las acompaña hasta la puerta de entrada a la JRV.
- Da las explicaciones que sean requeridas por el Presidente de la JRV.
- Las espera hasta que hayan ejercido el sufragio.
- Las acompaña a la salida del Centro de Votación.
- Se preocupa de que todo sea realizado de forma segura y sin contratiempo.

Chica invidente conducida a una junta receptora de votos / Blind girl being led toward a polling station

12





13

Facilitadores asistiendo a una anciana / Old lady being assisted by Facilitators

Equipo de dirigentes y promotores de la Fundación SOLIDEZ / SOLIDEZ management team with promoters

14





15

Seminario de evaluación del proyecto, 20 al 22 de noviembre / Project assessment workshop on November 20-22

Voluntarios movilizados en apoyo al proyecto / Volunteers mobilizing in support of the project

16

