Expanding young people's life opportunities from an intercultural perspective

An evaluation of SAIH's long-term commitment to education in Nicaragua's autonomous Atlantic region

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Places in the Atlantic Region visited by the evaluators

Acronyms

ANDEN	Asociación Nacional de Educadores Nicaragua
BICU	Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University
CEAA	Wawashang Environmental and Agroforestry Educational Centre
CEDEHCA	Center for Human Rights in the Autonomous Regions
CEIMM	Centre for Studies and Information on Multi-ethnic Women
CIDH	International Human Rights Court
CNU	National University Council
CONSIDA	Nicaraguan AIDS Commission
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EDATA11	Education Data for Decision Making
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FADCANIC	Foundation for Autonomy and Development on The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua
FOKUS	Forum for Women and Development
FSLN	Sandinista Front for National Liberation
GC	General Comments
HDR	Human Development Reports
HiOA	Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences
HIST	Sør Trondelag University College
IBIS	Danish Education for Development
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICHRP	International Human Rights Law and Practices
ICPPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
SICO	Reference System at Community level
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPILC	Institute of Linguistic Promotion and Cultural Revitalisation
JENH	Youth Establishing New Horizons
LAG	Latin America Group / Latin Amerika Gruppe
LGTBI	Lesbians, Gay, Transexuales, Bisexuals and Intergender
LLECE	Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education
MED	Ministry of Education
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIFAMILIA	Ministry of Family Affairs
MINED	Ministry of Education
MOSAFC	Model of Family and Community Health
NGO	Non-government organization
NORAD	Norwegian Aid Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
RACCN	Autonomous Region of the Caribbean Coast North
RACCS	Autonomous Region of the Caribbean Coast South
RBA	Rights Based Approach
RUTICAY	Red de Universidades Indigenous Interculturales y Comunitarias Abya Yala
SAIH	Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpefund
SEAR	Autonomous *Education System* in the Atlantic region
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SILAIS	*Sistemas Locales de Atención Integral de Salud*
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Education Science Culture Organization

UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNO	Nicaraguan National Opposition Union
URACCAN	University of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua
USAID	United States of America International Development
VAW	Violence Against Women
WB	The World Bank
WFP	World Food Program
YATAMA	Miskitu indigenous party: Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka.

Executive summary

Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation had four objectives: (1) identify and analyse results in terms of impact, specifically at program level; (2) give advice on future programming for development cooperation, both related to SAIH and partners; (3) analyse the quality of the partnership; (4) analyse project and partner sustainability with focus on Nicaraguan responsibility to ensure citizens' enjoyment of the right to education.

Data was collected through study of documents, face-to-face single interviews, focus groups and interviews using skype. A total of 149 people – divided into seven categories of stakeholders - were interviewed (see annex 1) in seven locations: the cities of Managua, Bluefields and Bilwi, the small towns and villages Rosita, Waspam and Pearl Lagoon and the boarding school in the natural reserve Wawashang.

SAIH's partners and overview of the financial support

The four studied partners of SAIH were FADCANIC (Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua) supported since 1997. The second organization is URACCAN, a decentralised intercultural university with a special status as a "Community University" supported since 1997. The third organization is CEIMM (Centre for Studies and Information on Multi-ethnic Women) a research centre at the university URACCAN has been supported since 2003. Lastly, CEDEHCA (Centre for Human, Civil and Autonomy Rights), a NGO dedicated to empowering especially young people in the autonomous regions, supported since 2009.

Main findings

Overall conclusion

The evaluation found that SAIH's development cooperation is relevant for the development of the Atlantic region and partners work. The cooperation has been well focused with good potential to be further improved.

SAIHs theoretical approach to development cooperation

A review of SAIH's steering documents concluded that SAIH uses both a solidarity approach and rights based approach. In steering documents, SAIH refers to international human rights tools and views education as a human right. The solidarity and partnership model somewhat put limits to the usage of the rights based approach, probably also related to the political context and partners political inclinations.

Quality of partnership

Partners recognized that the partnership model has been important and worked well. Partnership activities have given several partners international relations and global outlook, producing benefit to the financial cooperation. As a conclusion, the evaluator believes that partnership is important but could be defined better as well as partnership activities should have objectives that are more specified

Impacts from the early period: health services and solidarity in Norway

SAIH's early solidarity activities and the sending of health professionals in Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution 1979 had an impact on the solidarity movement in Nicaragua. SAIH provided organisations and media with analytical articles and other information, which contributed to a qualitative solidarity response from Norway to the new young Sandinista government in an un-attended geographical region.

Impact on education as a political priority

The most important result on the impact level is SAIH's work on education in the region. It is a significant contribution to the establishment of SEAR as an educational legal sub-system. Persons in leading roles especially in FADCANIC and URACCAN were able to realise the establishment of the educational system through introduction of laws and appointment of authorities.

SAIH's partners have placed education as a priority issue on the political and development agenda in the Atlantic region, with SEAR as important policy and strategy tool.

Impact on availability, accessibility and quality of education

In general, education in RACCS and RACCN is significantly more available and accessible compared to 10-15 years ago. However, big challenges remain to reduce high rates of illiteracy, increase enrolment in pre-school and secondary education, improve resources for bilingual education; the latter appear to be less important for the central government compared to some years ago.

On partners' specific outcomes the evaluation found that all the partners are well connected to and recognised by political and administrative authorities in RACCN and RACCS. Partners are appreciated by education and youth affairs authorities. Authorities to some extend also depend on activities supported by SAIH's partners. Examples are CEDECHA's informal trainings and cultural activities in many communities where educational and recreational opportunities for young people are scarce.

The high number of beneficiaries of education, training and other forms of education activities during many years is a significant contribution to professionalization of teachers and school directors as well as administrative staff in regional authorities.

SAIH's contribution to the establishment of URACCAN is another impact on the entire development of the Atlantic region, increasing opportunities of qualitative higher education for young people in areas deprived of even basic educational services.

Contribution to intercultural and multilingual identity and gender awareness

All four partners with have contributed significantly to the region's intercultural multilingual identity; promoting and practicing tolerance and cooperation between ethnic groups. SAIH's decision to support the establishment of URACCAN was wise and should continue.

The fourth partner to SAIH, CEIMM, has been successful in its main task to mainstream gender equality as issue within the institutional life of URACCAN. The evaluation found

that the level of theoretical knowledge and practical skills of gender equality and women's rights among both university teachers and students are very high. They have also used innovative methods to promote gender in the wider society in RACCS.

SAIH has also contributed to partners' overall institutional capacity, self-confidence and self-awareness, through the long-standing commitment from a solidary and partnership perspective.

Critical remarks and outstanding challenges

A critical and fundamental remark in the evaluation is that SAIH and partners have not devoted resources to review and carefully monitor the overall development of SEAR as a sub-legal education system for RACCS and RACCN. There is thus a lack of analysis on how education at different levels – from pre-school/kindergarten to university – is developing.

Furthermore, the evaluators found that there are significantly more published data on RACCS and RACCN than in the rest of the country during this impact study.

A significant weakness of partners was a limited understanding of the result based management method. In some cases reporting does not distinguish activities from results and more often there is no difference between outputs, outcomes and impact. This situation makes it difficult to assess the degree and fulfilment of SAIHs and partner's overall objectives. Future program and project programming should address this issue. Several recommendations in the report reflect this need.

Recommendations

A summary of the seven recommendations to SAIH and its partners finalise the executive summary:

1. Improvement of the understanding and use of the Result Based Management-model
SAIH should start an internal learning process about Result Based Management (RBM) in general and adapted to the field of education. It is true that planning frameworks has improved lately but there is still a gap between SAIHs understanding of outputs, outcomes and impacts and partners understanding and use of these concepts.

2. Analysing the present status of SEAR and the factors behind success and failures
SAIH should require partners to initiate – as an approximately one year project – an assessment of the status of SEAR, that is an overall analysis of the status of the right to education in RACCS and RACCN and factors related to challenges and failures.

3. Mapping young people's employability and careers
SAIH and partners should identify a limited number of URACCAN/CEIMM and Wawashang students plus participants in CEDEHCA's youth empowering activities and survey the current status in their life project: what are they doing for living some years after: work, studies, unemployment, income, activism, where they live etc.

4. Improving the use of resources
The recommendation of maximizing the use of resources and knowledge is by having the interconnection between the four organisations and SAIH supported projects. Each partner can assist in each of each other's project when needs arise. One example could be that CEDEHCA could give courses jointly about leadership with CEIMM such as they have already done with URACCAN at certain moments in the past.

5. Monitor and contribute to find other financial resources
To improve data on levels and prospects of sustainability SAIH should intensify the dialogue with partners on financial flows related to income generation outside of donor resources, including financial provisions by the state.

6. Engaging in discussion and analysis of the concept Theory of Change
SAIH together with partners topics should initiated a dialogue on the concept of Theory of Change. What are the most important conditions in the Nicaraguan society that have a positive effect of education? This recommendation is closely linked to recommendations number 2 and 3.

7. Encourage partners to collect statistics and analysis of trends related to key women's human rights
SAIH should encourage partners to coordinate efforts to collect statistics and analysis of trends on violence against women and sexual and reproductive rights and on economic empowerment of women connected to education.

1. Structure of the evaluation report

Chapter 2 describes how the evaluators addressed important aspects of the Terms of Reference (ToR): the scope, objectives, methodology and some limitations while conducting the assignment. It also explains the basics of a theoretical approach used to analyse SAIH's theoretical approach to its cooperation, which is discussed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 gives brief background to 30 years of cooperation, including some political context of the last three decades (a longer text of the history of Atlantic Region and SAIHs commitment to it is found in annex 5). Chapter 4 also contain tables with financial flows to the four partners during the last 15 years plus a brief overview of projects and their objectives. The first three chapters followed after this text is mainly descriptive. Chapter 5 – first of four on findings - contains the evaluators reflections on SAIHs solidarity approach and the rights based approach, while chapter 6 is the teams' evaluation of impacts and some outcomes, responding to many of the guidance questions from ToR.

Findings are divided between the ones from the early days of cooperation, followed by examples of more structural impact results on education policies and the autonomy itself. Then the chapter moves on to analyse the status of the education in the region, with more details from the northern region than the southern. In this part, I make some critical remarks linked to both SAIH and its partners, including some conclusions about the status of the educational sector. Chapter 7 is a reflection on sustainability – both of the achieved results and the organisations. Chapter 8 summarize overall conclusions while chapter 9 suggest ideas for further programming linking it to critical remarks and findings in earlier part of the report. Chapter 10 the report closes with specific recommendations making no distinctions to SAIH and the four partners because of logics of cooperation based on a true partnership.

2. Evaluation scope, objectives, approach, method and some limitations

2.1 Objectives and scope

Sector, partners and time frame: The evaluation is mainly focused on SAIHs commitment to support the education sector in Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, in both autonomous regions, the Autonomous Northern Atlantic Coast (RACCN) and the Autonomous Southern Atlantic Coast (RACCS). SAIH's four and quite long-standing partners (for presentation see chapter 3) were the most important subjects for the evaluation.

Terms of reference (ToR) did not mention a particular period that the evaluation should cover. As the support shifted from the health sector (1980-1995) to the education sector in the mid-1990, the evaluators used this as a starting point and 2014 as an end point.

Objectives: The first objective for SAIH was to identify and analyse results in terms of impact during this long-term commitment. ToR states that the results should be documented at *program level*, understood as mainly an overall analysis of SAIH's contribution to

strengthening the Autonomous *Educations System* in the Atlantic region (SEAR, a law) through the support to the work done by the four partners. Two other objectives were to get (1) an independent opinion on the sustainability of the results and the sustainability of the four partners and (2) advise SAIH and its partners how the cooperation could improve, with a particular emphasis on future programme development for SAIH in Nicaragua and for partners documenting results and in general improve their work.[1] Related to sustainability was the issue of the prospects of increased responsibility of the Nicaraguan state to fulfil the right to education for all citizens on the Atlantic Coast.

Finally, the ToR mentions a need to assess the quality of partnership, between SAIH and its partners, mentioning aspects of communication, reciprocity, "including what has been the added value in Norway through collaboration between Nicaraguan institutions and organizations and SAIH and Norwegian educational institutions."[2]

The intended users of the evaluation report and presentation are both SAIH and its partners.

2.2 Theoretical approach

As a theoretical approach the team used a conceptual model based on a combination of the "solidarity-approach" and the "rights based approach", both used in SAIH's strategy documents.[3] Referring to the later education should be viewed both as national right stated in the Nicaraguan constitution and national laws and also an obligation, according to International Human Rights Law, especially stated in the HDR (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights) (article 26) and in the more legally binding International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (article 13). The latter says the right to education should be seen both as a human right in itself and as being indispensable to realize a wide range other human rights. With regard to higher education, the covenant says that it "shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education".

The team also chose to apply the so called A4-framework, elaborated by the former UN Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski stated that education should be available, accessible, adapted and accepted[4] as these dimensions cover partner's ambitions

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[1] See Annex 1, Terms of Reference, p. 5.

[2] Terms of reference, p. 5.

[33] Two key strategy documents refers to human rights as being part of SAIHs core values, see *Education for Liberation, SAIH's strategy for development cooperation 2012 – 2017"*and *"Education for Development Strategy. Education for Liberation. Development based on knowledge and solidarity 2008 – 2012"*.

[4] See *General Comment 13* on the right to education by the monitoring treaty body of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). A short version of the definitions are: **(a) Availability**: Functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity within the jurisdiction of the State party, all institutions and programmes are likely to require buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water and trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries. **(b) Accessibility** has three overlapping dimensions: Non-discrimination - education must be accessible to all; physical accessibility - education has to be within safe physical reach; economic accessibility - education has to be affordable to all. **(c) Acceptability:** The form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be acceptable (e.g. relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents; **(d) Adaptability**: Education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings. http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/ae1a0b126d068e868025683c003c8b3b?Opendocument

of an higher education reaching historically excluded people, based on a society with many ethnic groups, non-discrimination, good academic standards adapted to the local context and with an overall aim to liberate the beneficiaries creating options and opportunities in their lives. The overall importance of these characteristics of a qualitative education will not be forgotten and be in the forefront of each interview and analysis and in the final document.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Understanding of impact and outcome mapping

To fulfil the expectations to find possible results on impact level it was necessary to define impact and distinguish it from results at output and outcome level. The consultant used outcome-mapping technique to search for these three forms of results and analyse eventual links between them in an attempt to initiate a discussion on how to aggregate and possible identifying SAIH's attribution to outcomes and more important impact level.

SAIH's and partners description of results has been described in a number of yearly and tri-annual reports. Based on them a typical outcome mapping could look like the following:

GRAPH 1: Simple outcome mapping model
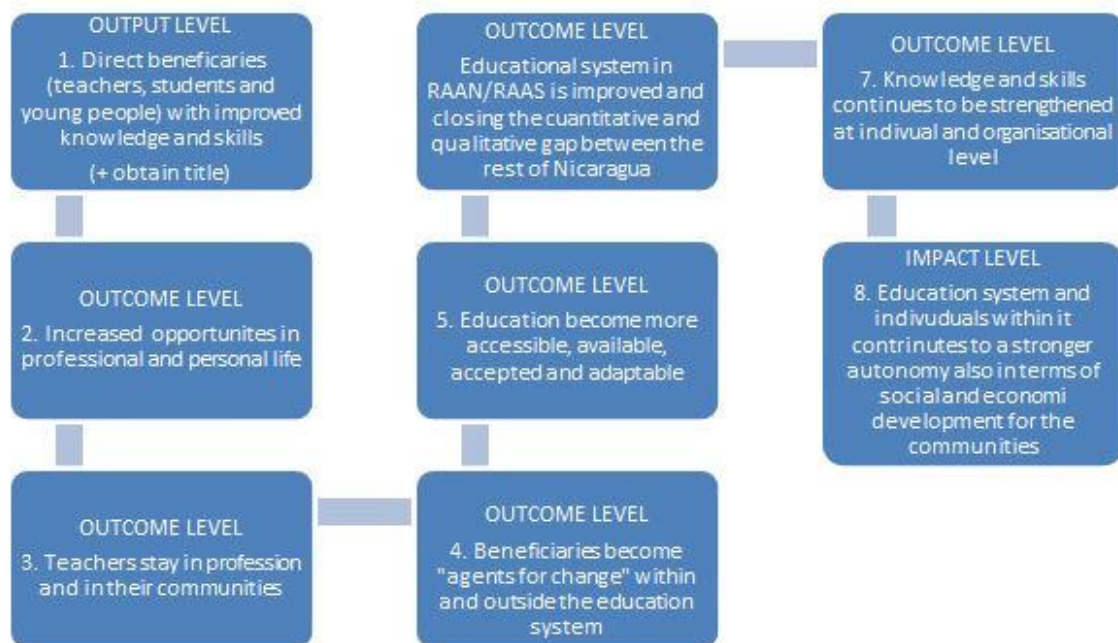
What exactly should be characterized as outputs, outcomes and impacts is not fixed. It can often vary according a more or less subjective assessment. The consultant uses the definition promoted by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which has been adapted by development operations agencies such Norwegian Agency for

Development Cooperation Aid (NORAD) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).[5]

The consultant created proper understanding of impact using the definition by OECD/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and several development cooperation agencies: "primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended unintended".[6] Impact is often about structural sustained changes within the society, at local, regional or national level. Impact is about implementation of laws and policies as well as other political decisions. Although impact may also be used to study all sorts of effects of a development intervention, that is a more wide definition of impact.[7] In this report, I deliberately use impact as being a mayor result, structural or close to structural, for example meaning strengthening SEAR as an educational system with all the dimensions as explained in sub-chapter 6.2. This because the evaluation intends to cover more than 30 years of cooperation and predominant results from partners to SAIH over the years has been about quantitative aspects – huge amount of numbers on a variety of topics, but less on education quality.

2.3.2 Data collection

Data-collection was made through studying of a large amount of documents, publications, single face-to-face interviews and focus groups and observation. Document reading and analysis comprised a selection of annual and tri-annual reports from partners to SAIH reports to Norah, SAIHs solidary and education strategies plus other publications, also from external sources. A list of studied documents and publications is found in annex 3.

The team interviewed 149 persons in Nicaragua (130) and Norway (19). Of these 97 were women and 52 men. With a few exceptions they were face-to-face interviews, divided into single person interviews, focus groups and at some occasion more informal groups (for example at the Wawashang School). The team strived for gender and ethnic balance as the empowerment dimension includes both women's and girl's rights and indigenous and minority groups' rights. To cover a range of relevant actors' interviewees were divided in to the following categories six categories:

A. Direct and indirect beneficiaries of SAIHs supported projects, mainly teachers and students in RACCSs and RACCN;

B. Managers, technical and administrative staff at the four partners-organisations,

C. National, regional and local authorities responsible for and dedicated to education and youth in RACCN and RACCS,

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[5] **Outputs** refer to what is produced directly or immediately by an activity. Depending on their nature, outputs may, or may not be straightforward to measure. **Outcome**s could be defined as the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. **Impact** is defined as positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. (See *"Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management"*, (Sida and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden (2008) and *"Glossary of statistical terms"*, (OECD, 2007).

[6] See footnote no. 5.

[7] See http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/impact.

D. Political and social leaders at national, regional and local levels who had influence over the creation of the autonomy of RACCN and RACCS,

E. National and international experts in the field of education and still is committed to the region's over all development.

F. Present and former staff at SAIH in Norway as well as in Nicaragua and

G. Persons in Norway involved in different forms of exchange.

During interviews, the team used semi-structured questionnaires adapted to each of these groups. Notes were mostly taken by hand.

With the an ambition to cover different locations where significant numbers of directed e towards beneficiaries work and where they live, the team went to both capitals of RACCN and RACCS, Bilwi and Bluefields respectively, and also the small and distant municipalities and communities: Rosita, Waspam (RACCN), Pearl Lagoon and Wawashang (RACCS).

As the support has been ongoing for many years, there was a need to get an overview of some data. Provided data from the four partners is presented in some of the tables in this report.

2.3.3 Validity, reliability and triangulation

The large number of interviewees of different ages, and in seven different categories of stakeholders, both in Norway and in Nicaragua, supported the team in the efforts to validate and triangulate information both written documents and interview responses. Many interrelations also made triangulation possible.

The identification of the sample needed in the RACCN based on the ToR's objectives. This meant that the first category had to do with the category of those who dreamt of an education for the autonomous regions that referred to as "visionaries", the remaining five categories were the four organizations identified by SAIH and counterparts and finally the Norwegian health personnel that had working in the RACCN since 1980.

2.4 Limitations

One limitation was the lack of access to official updated statistics on education – at local, regional and national levels, especially related to RACCS and RACCN and comparative data with the rest of Nicaragua. It would have been important for both an assessment of impacts and outcome related to SEAR and also triangulation and comparative purposes. Limited access to official data has also consequences for SAIH's overall objective to strengthening the contribution to strengthening the autonomous *education system* in the Atlantic region (SEAR).[8] The four partner's specific contribution to this without a baseline data or benchmarks on education performance at national, department and RACCN/RACCS and even municipality-level it is difficult, if not impossible, to get comparative qualitative and

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[8] SEAR the acronym in Spanish for Sistema Educativo Autonomic Regional.

quantitative data of the development of the SEAR and partner's presumed contribution to its strengthening.

The consultant approached the Nicaraguan Ministry for Education (MED) and was asked to first get a permission from the Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), who according to a high ranking official at MED should give permission for MED to meet the consultant. Letters sent to two different officials at MFA asking for this permission, but despite anticipation in time, they never replied. Independent educational experts, Nicaraguan NGO-sources confirmed that most official statistics on education progress was considered to be non-public. However, some official statistics exist, but is quite outdated (from 2009). Nicaragua also has a UNESCO-delegate that is participating in UNESCO's Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE).[9]

A second limitation was geographical distances and political obstacles. The Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua goes through constant political, social and economic changes. RACCS is characterized by waterways and dense jungle and is accessible only by air or boat.

The RACCN is accessible by land but often unpassable during rainy season or poor maintenance of bridges, broken winches at the Rio Wawa or blocked by groups of colonialist from the east of Nicaragua moving into RACCN as well as locals the protesting against the Regional government or robbers that assault at random. Road trips towards the RACCN can take from 8 hours to days from Managua to Bilwi and makes the demand on air travel overwhelming. Both regions are plagued by severe rainfall, poor condition of planes and ad hoc decisions taken by the airline. There is never any certainty if you will be able to board the plane.

During the interviews in the RACCN, the road blocked by the village of Sahsa between the mining town of Rosita and Bilwi, and by the bridge of Sisin returning to Bilwi from Waspam where a heavy truck fell through the bridge were just some of the limitations. The RACCN evaluation team members were fortunate to pass both critical spots just prior to become unpassable. The infrastructure and uncertainty of getting around in the RACCN is more complicated than in the RACCS and sometimes it takes pure luck to arrive to the destination.

An attributing factor to the geographical limitation was the political crisis in the RACCN for the last two years. There are aggressive and violent actions taken by political parties and followers to stop the selling of land in the autonomous region that are considered communal to persons migrating from the Pacific.

A third limitation was language in the RACCN. In some of the interviews, especially with Miskitu women, a translator was needed to pick up the information both in Rosita and in Waspam. The use of Miskitu and Mayagna come in addition to Spanish and English is being by the Creole population in the RACCN. Languages in the RACCS are Spanish and two types of English: King's English and Creole.

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[9] http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7919&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Due to the funeral of a son to a prominent FSLN leader in the Atlantic Region, some interviews were done in Managua and not as planned in the RACCS or in RACCN.

2.5 Recognition

The evaluators were well received by all involved stakeholders. A special thanks to the staff of the partners in Nicaragua who collaborated with the team efficiently with a spirit of openness and responsibility, including providing additional information during the writing process.

2.6 The consultant team

The evaluation team was Jocke Nyberg (team leader), a human rights evaluator based in Sweden, C. "Hai" Almquist Buvollen, a sociologist based in Honduras and Norway, and Henningston Hodgson, a sociologist based in Nicaragua. All three have significant experience of development cooperation assignments in Nicaragua.

3. SAIH's theoretical approach to development cooperation

3.1 SAIHs steering documents

SAIHs main steering documents are the solidarity strategy and the education strategy.[10] Three versions of the education strategy cover 1997-2002, 2003-2009 and 2008-2012 respectively. The present solidary strategy – replacing the educational strategies - covers 2012-2017. The latter ("Education for liberation") was a prominent guiding document during the evaluation. Education for liberation should be understood as quality education based on the local context and the local needs with the purpose to "inform, raise awareness, develop and liberate individuals, groups and societies, and provide tools to critical and independent thinking".[11] It further states that development and strategy should be viewed through a political lens, and the importance to work changes at structural levels with particular emphasis on gender relations and discrimination based on ethnic identity.

The strategy further mentions that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a cornerstone UN document for human rights, is the basis for all of SAIH's activities. It quotes article 26:

> Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages that include 1-6 grades. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit.[12]

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[10] The four strategy papers are: **1.** SAIHs Utdanningstrategi. Utdanning for frigjøring for en utvikling på samhold og solidaritet, 1997 – 2002; **2.** SAIH's Education strategy, Education for Liberation, Development based on knowledge and solidarity, 2003–2009. Education for Development Strategy, "Education for Liberation", Development based on knowledge and solidarity, 2008 – 2012; and **4.** SAIH's Solidarity Strategy, "Education for liberation", SAIH's strategy for development cooperation, 2012 – 2017.

[11] "Education for liberation", SAIH's strategy for development cooperation, 2012 – 2017, p. 3.

[12] http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/

Reflecting on education quality SAIH's solidarity strategy says:

....quality education means education that demolish discriminatory barriers, safeguards local cultural heritage, gives people relevant knowledge and competence to change their own living conditions and contribute to the development of their society. (- - - -) SAIH believe quality education enables democratic participation, has a curriculum suitable for the social context, builds on international human rights and considers local languages and context. Research is also a central component of education. That may give new opportunities and contribute to better solutions for the individual, groups, and to the country as a whole.[13]

In an attempt to interpret the right to education – as a human right – the strategy goes on with:

SAIH will not assume the state's responsibility to provide quality education to youth, but may support quality education, training and advocacy for a better education system in cases where the official education system fails by:

– Discriminating against and excluding certain groups and not offering equal opportunities and participation for all (related to gender, ethnicity, language, disability, political, religious or social affiliation, sexual orientation or HIV status.)

- By not offering relevant knowledge that enable youth to participate and influence the society and make independent choices about their health and future.[14]

The strategy also spells out that the right to education is linked to human rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and the right of peaceful assembly and "further to participate and influence be able to make decisions in one's own life, as well as cultural rights such as education in one's own language."[15] It also refers to education as a tool to combat increasing youth employment, a global phenomenon.

3.2 The right to education as a human right in International Law

The consultant took note that while the strategy also mentions – in a footnote - article 13 on the right to education in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR)[16] it does not refer to its content. The point made here is that the right to education in ICECSR is more demanding than expressed in UDHR's article 26. Being a convention, signed and ratified by Nicaragua without reservations, the ICESCR puts a strong obligation on any government in the following terms:

(a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all.

(b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;

(c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;

(d) Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education; (- - -)

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[13] SAIH's Solidarity Strategy 2012-2017, p. 4
[14] Above, p. 5.
[15] Above, p. 5-6.
[16] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx.

As other human rights conventions, the ICESCR hosts a permanent international monitoring mechanism – the treaty body, or more exactly the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)[17] – that regularly not only examines State Party's compliance but also makes recommendations and has a dialogue with both state and non-state actors. It also submits so called General Comments (GC no 13 is on the right to education) and broader recommendations on how different articles in the convention should be interpreted and consequently what immediate and progressive steps State Parties should take. Nicaragua reported to the committee 2008[18] and should have submitted a second report 2013, according to the reporting rules established in the convention itself, but failed to do so. With this Nicaragua is not fulfilling its obligations, a violation of the ICESCR itself. The government has also failed to report in due time (2012) to another monitoring body, the Human Rights Committee; in charge of screening states compliance of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICPPR). The reason for this is unknown but worrying from a human rights perspective.

In addition he UN special rapporteur on the right to education has conducted authoritative interpretations of article 13 of ICESCR on three phrases containing "by all appropriated means", "to the maximum of its available resources" and "to achieve progressively"[19]. In the To understand the full scope of obligations for the Nicaraguan state, SAIH and partners have here good sources and materials they can use in a constructive dialogue with high ranking officials and politicians in Managua.

The relevance of raising these aspects about the right to education, and the degree of the State's duties in international human rights law is not only about how SAIH's strategy is being formulated. It is also found in the terms of reference for this evaluation. Sustainability is one important issue and the ToR put the following question to the evaluators to examine:

> Will the Nicaraguan State take over responsibilities for funding and support of education in the Atlantic region in the near future? How can SAIH support the work for this to happen? What is a realistic time horizon?[20]

The consultant will return to these issues in Chapter 5 on findings describing the four partners' views on how to advocate for the right to education as well as reflections by other stakeholders and the evaluation team. It is also present in the recommendations.

3.3 Supporting indigenous and afro-descendent people's rights

Both previous and current cooperation programs have a focus on intercultural and multilingual education, which is relevant and in accordance to theories developed by world

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[17] See: http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cescr/pages/cescrindex.aspx
[18] After a thoroughly scrutiny included interviews with state representatives and analysing parallel reports from Nicaraguan NGO's the committee 208 concluded the existence of racial prejudice against indigenous people, especially in the Atlantic Autonomous Regions and in particular against indigenous and Afro-descendant women. The Committee also highlighted what it considered being "serious shortcomings in the health and education services" and "the lack of an institutional presence" in RACCN and RACCS and "the absence of a consultation process to seek communities' free, prior and informed consent to the exploitation of natural resources in their territories".
[19] See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/SREducation/Pages/SREducationIndex.asp
[20] ToR, p. 6.

leading experts. The approach has also a solid base in a number of international instruments, ranging from the ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal rights, several international human rights conventions to the Rio declaration on Environment and Development and more recent UN declaration on indigenous rights. They are well known to SAIH and their partners and the question raised by the evaluators in chapter 5 is if these instruments can be further used in the dialogue between the Nicaraguan state and partners with the overall objective to strengthen the rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendants people's in the Autonomous Regions.

3.4 The idea of partnership

The vision and idea that SAIHs development cooperation should have an added value expressed as partnership – has been present in all the four strategy papers studied, covering the period 1997-2017. "SAIH shall be more than a mere donor. The solidarity must build on mutual respect", as present Solidarity Strategy says.[21]

The partnership is expressed in terms of "SAIH shall be more than a mere financial donor. The partnership must be built on mutual respect and a wish to reach a common goal".[22] One question in the evaluation is how is the quality of the partner relationship and collaboration experienced by the partner organizations?

3.5 Mainstreaming gender equality

SAIH has followed the general trend to pay more attention to gender equality. To combat gender discrimination and to empower woman in both developing and developed countries has become one of the far most important issues for political, social, economic and cultural progress, and even a topic for geopolitical security. By targeting discrimination against woman and girls within indigenous and afro-descendent and mestizo communities SAIH, entered an extremely important and complex field that often is referred to as cultural relativism. Arguing to support a common approach in multicultural societies that women's and men's roles are complementary and that the principle of human rights as being universal, applying to all cultures at global level, is a western invention and even with a potential to destroy unity and wellbeing of indigenous communities. Does the question on women's control over their own bodies fit into this context-adapted debate and within the wider Nicaraguan context as the country's legislation on sexual and reproductive rights is one of the most restrictive in the world? How has SAIH's push for empowerment of women been addressed by partners and wider Atlantic coast society as a whole? Such questions are relevant to consider any possible impact.

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[21] SAIH's Solidarity Strategy 2012-2017, p. 8
[22] Above, p. 8

4. Overview of SAIH's cooperation on education and health

4.1 Brief historical background

SAIHs decision to support the education sector in the Atlantic coast has a background of 15 years of solidarity work mainly in the health sector as well as closely intertwined with a number of solidarity activities in Norway. The direct support in Nicaragua started with sending Norwegian health workers to Rio Coco, a remote Miskitu dominated area close to the Honduran border, 13 months after FSLNs victory over the Somoza dictatorship July 19, 1979.[23] The counterrevolution soon gained force through the US backed members of Somoza National Guard (soon labelled "Contras") and Miskitu rebels. The latter took up arms against the young revolutionary government due to its' ignorant behaviour in the Atlantic region, where FSLN cadres had no knowledge or experience. Rio Coco became a war zone and the small SAIH medical the team was moved to Puerto Cabezas later known as Bilwi, the main town in northern part of the Atlantic region. From there, the small SAIH team that participated in mobile brigades and working at the hospital. This first period was known to be the solidary phase and lasted until 1988.

An evaluation of these first years was made in 1984 (Lie and Bye 1984), and a proposal was made to build a new nursing school in Puerto Cabezas/Bilwi with Norwegian support. This was in part an effort to emphasize the main objective of SAIH, which is promoting education. Involvement with health teams in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe had been sidesteps from the projects that SAIH was usually involved. The building of the school took much longer than planned because of the limitations of the war economy and shortage of materials. During the latter part of the 1980s, the teams remained at the hospital and the health centre in Puerto Cabezas/Bilwi while the school was being slowly built.

The latter part of the 1980s also represented an important period for the historically abandoned Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The war between the Sandinista revolutionary army and Miskitu rebel groups, which continued to receive weapons and logistic support United States through Honduras, had a devastating effect on the already impoverished and undeveloped region. The Miskitu rebels developed a discourse about autonomy as their political goal and wanted to distinguish themselves from the *Contra* forces, as they were a proxy army of the United States' interests.

From 1984, the Sandinista government realized that a solution could be found with the Miskitu rebels, and the first negotiations to establish an autonomous regime started in 1985. A gradual seizure of hostilities was accomplished and the Autonomy Law was approved by the Legislative Assembly in September 1987.

During these years, the presence of a Norwegian medical team in Puerto Cabezas (Bilwi) meant more exposure of the Atlantic Coast in Norwegian media than in other European countries. The team members offered analysis and opinions that were clearly grounded in solidarity with the Sandinista revolution. In addition, SAIH as organization in Norway

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[23] See Annex 5 for a historical background on the Atlantic region and SAIHs support to the health sector.

contributed with analysis and participation in debates as an organization with undisputed expertise on this specific region of Nicaragua and the autonomy process. The SAIH-team had close relationship to many of the political actors in the autonomy process. Many of these had their background in the health sector. SAIH can be regarded as accompanying the autonomy process and expressed interest in the opportunities for new autonomous policies on health and education.

The first solidarity period (1980-1988) followed by a health education phase (1988-96), when SAIH supported the building of a new nursing school to replace the loss of the hospital and nursing school in Bilwaskarma, a Miskitu village on the banks of the Rio Coco. The new nursing school was inaugurated in 1989 and since 1990; it was the dominating activity of SAIH.

The peace agreement between FSLN and the "Contras" in April 1990 followed the general elections in February 1990, when Violeta Chamorro representing the united liberal and conservative opposition alliance under the umbrella UNO defeated FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega. A peaceful period followed with improved condition for the autonomy to develop.

Switching from support from health care to education was a decision by SAIH well in line with the visions and ideas the architects of the autonomy had and maintain today. Very early education was believed to be condition for success of the autonomy in a region suffering from historical discrimination, exploitation and poverty.

> "The autonomy was the only way for us to change the fact that we were second class citizens in Nicaragua and to decide about education was the most important thing", as one interviewee recalls.

FADCANIC, which played a crucial role in the establishment of URACCAN, the university, has been the longest standing partner to SAIH.

4.3.1 Partners, projects and beneficiaries

The four partner organisations that SAIH cooperate today are:

FADCANIC (Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua) is a recognized and visible actor with strong legitimacy on the Caribbean coast. Cooperation started early, including during the health period in the 1990's.

URACCAN is a decentralised intercultural university with a special status as a "Community University". SAIH initiated cooperation 1997, when plans to establish URACCAN became concrete to establish the university.

CEIMM (Centre for Studies and Information on Multi-ethnic Women) is a research centre at the university URACCAN.

CEDEHCA (Centre for Human, Civil and Autonomy Rights) is a NGO dedicated to empowering especially young people in the autonomous regions.

The following tables give an overview of SAIH supported education projects to each one of the four partners since 1997.

TABLE 1: FADCANIC, overview supported projects, 1997-2015		
Name of project	**Year**	**Main objectives**
1. Teachers Training	1997-2015	To provide resources and strategies that will contribute to improve the professional level of the empirical[24]I teachers of the Southern Autonomous Caribbean region, as a way of bettering the quality of the education of the students, of this region of the country.
2. Production of textbooks	2002 -15	Design and produce textbooks and instructional materials according to the needs of students and teachers of the south Atlantic Caribbean Region, benefited from the project.
3. Environ-mental and Agroforestry Education Center (CEAA), Wawashang	2004-15	Strengthening the Regional Autonomous Education System (SEAR) in the region, providing resources and capabilities to Caribbean youth of both sexes, who do not have opportunities to access educational subsystems of the Autonomous Regions. The project is aimed to transform and develop together with youth in situations of vulnerability by providing them technical knowledge and skills, work and production experiences to improve productivity.
4. Cultural revitalization	2007- 15	Revitalize Caribbean cultures by strengthening local capacity and recovery of the traditions and customs of the indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, developing cognitive, cultural, educational, and vocational training processes to ensure sustainable human development and improve qualities of life.
5. Training Teachers on Cross cutting Themes.	2013-15	Plan and implement a training program on cross cutting themes as a complementary strategy to strengthen the social and human development knowledge of teachers benefited by the project.

TABLE 2: URACCAN, overview of supported projects, 2003-2017		
Project name	**Year**	**Development, overall or/and project objectives (DO, OO, PO)**
Cooperation project 2003-2008: Teaching in a new cultural context	2003-08	DO: Mutually exchanging knowledge in relevant disciplines in nursing.
Strengthening of URACCAN	2006-08	DO: Men and women of the Autonomous Regions of the present and future generations have developed capabilities to guarantee decent living conditions, to participate effectively in the construction and consolidation of a participatory democracy and intercultural citizenship, within a framework of relations that revitalizes the cultural identity, promotes gender equality and protect natural resources.
Deepening of SEAR from the university	2009-12	DO: Indigenous, African descent and mestizo peoples of the Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua realize efficient and full exercise of their autonomous educational rights of self-determination within the framework of a process of decolonization. PO: Fully strengthened the regional self-management capabilities for implementing the Sub- Regional Autonomous Education System (SEAR), from an intercultural and gender equity perspective.
Assurance of the quality and the relevance of the community and intercultural model of community university URACCAN	2013-17	DO: The multi-ethnic population of the Autonomous Regions exercises effectively the right to relevant and quality higher education for the construction of the exercise intercultural citizenship in Nicaragua.

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[24] "Empirical teachers", a concept used by SAIH partners, are teachers working at different education levels without formal education to become teachers. Often they have few years of school.

TABLE 3: CEDEHCA, overview of supported projects, 2009-2015

Name of project	Year	Main objectives
2. Youth leadership with emphasis on cultural identity and sexual and reproductive rights	2009-12	Youth of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua develop leadership and youth participation skills by strengthening cultural identity and the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights of young indigenous and Afro descendants.
2. Youth leadership with emphasis on cultural identity and sexual and reproductive rights	2013-15	Youth of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua have developed leadership skills, organization and mobilization, participating from the perspective of their own cultures in the various areas of decision-making and influencing actions related to their welfare and projection in their communities and region.

TABLE 4: CEIMM, overview of supported projects, 2003-2015

Name of project	Year	Main objectives
1. Specialization of indigenous and ethnic women in multidisciplinary and participatory research with a focus on gender and intercultural issues.	2003	Institutional strengthening through capacity building and participatory research and interdisciplinary dissemination with a focus on gender and multicultural issues for women in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua as a means to contribute influencing public policies and programs by: - Establishing a team of multi-ethnic women with expertise in participatory interdisciplinary research, with focus on gender and multicultural issues. - Developing research on gender and women. - Promoting academic exchange forums on research findings and -experiences of social impact on gender issues. - Strengthening CEIMM's documentation centre
Consolidation of a research culture based on cultural identity with critical analysis of the reality from an intercultural and gender perspective.	2004-06	Women and men from the peoples and communities of the Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua develop a critical awareness of gender and multiculturalism, with the following expected results: - Capital formed in critical analysis and participatory social research that is intercultural gender-sensitive. It has research and innovative and relevant information on the Autonomous Regions, from a gender perspective and ethnic. - Consolidated strategic networks with ongoing coordinated work related to research on women's and gender issues. Disseminated and published activities and investigations.
Investigation, educate, debate and propose: a proposal for action against gender violence in multi-ethnic contexts	2007-09	Contribute to building a culture of peace in the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, based on the institutionalization of a regional strategy aimed at eradicating all forms of gender violence in the context of regional autonomy, through : - Characterization and scale of the phenomenon of violence in the Caribbean Coast, through the strengthening of the investigative processes - Positioning of women leaders and universities combatting gender violence, and analysing feminism from a perspective of cultural diversity. - Strengthening methodological tools and knowledge of key players in the implementation of the Regional Strategy "Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence". - Creating awareness of the coastal multi-ethnic society about the need to build a culture of peace in the autonomous regions, without violence, and discuss feminism and gender from a perspective of ethnic diversity.
The right to a life without violence, construction of the intercultural women citizenship in the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast	2010-12	Promoting and defending indigenous, Afro and mestizo women in Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast rights to a life without violence of, through: - Capacity building of coastal agents and rights holders in prevention and treatment of gender-based violence (GBV) - Capacity building of indigenous, Afro and mestizo women as subjects of law, with emphasis on the right to a life without violence - Leading advocacy processes and social audit, the exercise of the right to a life without violence - Mobilizing actors of the coastal civil society on tackling gender violence from the perspective of human rights of women, with a vision of multiculturalism.
5. Liberation education for intercultural gender citizenship.	2013-15	- Exercising the right to intercultural education from a gender perspective, in the regional context, as part of the recognition of new forms of citizenship, promoting the development of an intercultural critical awareness of gender within the educational model of intercultural community college. This is intended to:

	- Strengthen institutional URACCAN condition for the development of critical awareness of intercultural gender. - Promotion of intercultural gender perspective in the construction of knowledge on the Caribbean Coast.

4.3.2 Grants 2000-2014

Table 5 gives an overview of the last 15 years financial support to the four partners in Nicaragua, FADCANIC is the oldest and financially most supported organisation, which makes one specific project – training of teachers – the largest, followed by URACCAN. The years showed coincide more or less with the full implementation of the decision to switch focus from support to the health sector to the education sector. Although this evaluation did not have the task to do a cost-benefit analysis, the consultant believes the financial overview is relevant.

TABLE 5: SAIH's financial support to four partners in Nicaragua, 2000-2014 (USD)				
	Partner and sum of financial support			
Year	**FADCANIC**	**URACCAN**	**CEIMM**	**CEDEHCA**
2000	133,142	69,390	0	0
2001	145,639	110,397	0	0
2002	149,400	114,500	0	0
2003	151,323	205,263	75,000	0
2004	348,632	220,000	83,200	0
2005	376,119	278,600	93,950	0
2006	483,812	261,731	145,000	0
2007	450,245	338,100	154,54	0
2008	479,815	296,950	173,200	0
2009	518,975	280,000	201,553	94,940
2010	524,901	330,000	198,032	100,000
2011	586,309	317,500	179,898	105,000
2012	575,000	307,800	131,480	105,000
2013	663,334	357,500	198,500	136,000
2014	703,000	368,676	201,500	127,000
Sum	**6,289,646**	**3,676,620**	**1,835,467**	**667,940**
Total all:	**12,469,673 USD**			

* Source: Figures to the evaluators provided by FADCANIC, URACCAN, CEIMM and CEDEHCA and may differ slightly from SAIH's records. Figures support to URACCAN 2000 and 2001 are from SAIH.

5. Findings on SAIH's cooperation and solidarity approach

5.1 Is the solidarity approach compatible with a human rights based approach?

5.1.1 Content in the strategy documents

The four analysed strategy documents shows that SAIH has a clear understanding of education as a social right and the fulfilling of this right is a condition for people to exercise other human rights, not at least civil and political rights such as freedom of expression,

peaceful assembly, participation in public affairs and enjoy sexual and reproductive rights. Correctly, education is the most important instrument to become an agent for change.

Indigenous rights and cultural rights have also prominent status in the strategy papers, particularly in the present one (2012-2017). A general trend is that the strategies increasingly over time contain a mind-set of rights. In the current solidarity strategy, "rights" is mentioned 25 times and "human rights" six times, significantly more frequent than in the three previous strategies, and adding references to specific conventions and rights as mentioned in chapter 2.

The question is whether this change towards more focus on rights has had any impact on the actual development cooperation, in planning, implementing and monitoring practices, by both SAIH and the four partners. In other words, to what degree does or should the any present strategy document reflects cooperation reality. One could also ask if the solidarity approach is different or compatible with a Rights Based Approach (RBA).

5.1.2 Three approaches to development cooperation

According to some scholars and development cooperation experts, development cooperation may be categorized in three broad perspectives or approaches.

TABLE 6: Three development cooperation approaches		
Charity Approach	*Solidarity Approach*	*Human Rights-Based Approach*
It speaks of "give" and "receive", the reason for engagement is compassion.	Contrary to charity aid its emotional basis is solidarity	It focuses on the judicial responsibility of the state towards the individual, referring to the texts in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN HR conventions that a large number of countries have signed and ratified
It is short-term and often focused on emergency relief	It emphasizes collaboration and exchange of ideas and practices	It sees the conventions as both aims and means to reach a better respect for human rights
It transfers or provides necessities	It has an interest in the causes for injustice - also in political terms.	It contains a systematic information work concerning violations of human rights: searching, processing, analysing, storing and disseminating information about violations
It focus ion providing rather than results and impacts	It has a clear focus on results and is aimed at achieving sustainable changes	Essential working methods are advocacy and striving for political influence at various levels, from the smallest level of community/villages to municipality, province and national and international level. Target groups are authorities with the responsibility to respect, promote, fulfil and implement the HR conventions or groups that can have an influence on them.
It often tends to be less professional	It strives for professionalism (and therefore appreciates evaluations and research about development projects and programs)	It requires new forms of knowledge.
It avoids asking why the need exists.		Few governments like to be monitored about their fulfilment of human rights obligations.

*Source: The original was elaborated by Thomas Hammarberg, former General Secretary of Amnesty International, and of Rädda Barnen Sweden and Commissioner of Human Rights of the Council of Europe.

SAIH reflects on issues related to the content in table 2:

> "Solidarity is different from charity or sympathy; it represents social cohesion, a sense of community, reciprocal responsibility and common goals. It is SAIH's opinion that students and academics worldwide have common interest in increased joint knowledge, participation, respect, human rights and liberation. It is necessary with nuanced knowledge and awareness of other people's situation in order to create solidarity."[25]

As the quote shows, SAIH does not see the solidarity approach as something different from the rights based approach. During discussions between the consultant and former and present SAIH representatives it became quite clear that SAIH's cooperation approach should be placed in somewhere in between the solidary perspective and the human rights perspective: SAIH emphasis collaboration and exchange of ideas and has a focus on results and an interest in the causes for injustice, also in political terms. At the same time the solidarity strategy contains elements of human rights based approach: those are participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency. However, the solidarity strategy does not refer to RBA specifically and much less as being a method.

5.1.3 Analysis

Human rights and RBA do not appear to be present in the dialogue between SAIH and its partners, at least if one envisage human rights not only as norms but also as a legal and political system in international relations with specific obligations for the state. Even more important is the fact that the human rights regime has a recognized monitoring system making all state parties accountable towards its citizens, neighbouring states and the international community as a whole. In general, terms it is hard to think that of improvement of human rights will be achieved without human rights work, and particularly by civil society organisations. That is, among other things, regular campaigns, specific lobby work towards government and parliament, monitoring and reporting on states compliance and non-compliance (on conventions and specific articles), collaboration with national human rights institutions (Defensoría Pública de Nicaragua) and litigation. Graphic 2 gives an overview of classic human rights work:

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[25] SAIH's Solidarity Strategy, "Education for liberation", SAIH's strategy for development cooperation 2012 – 2017, p. 3
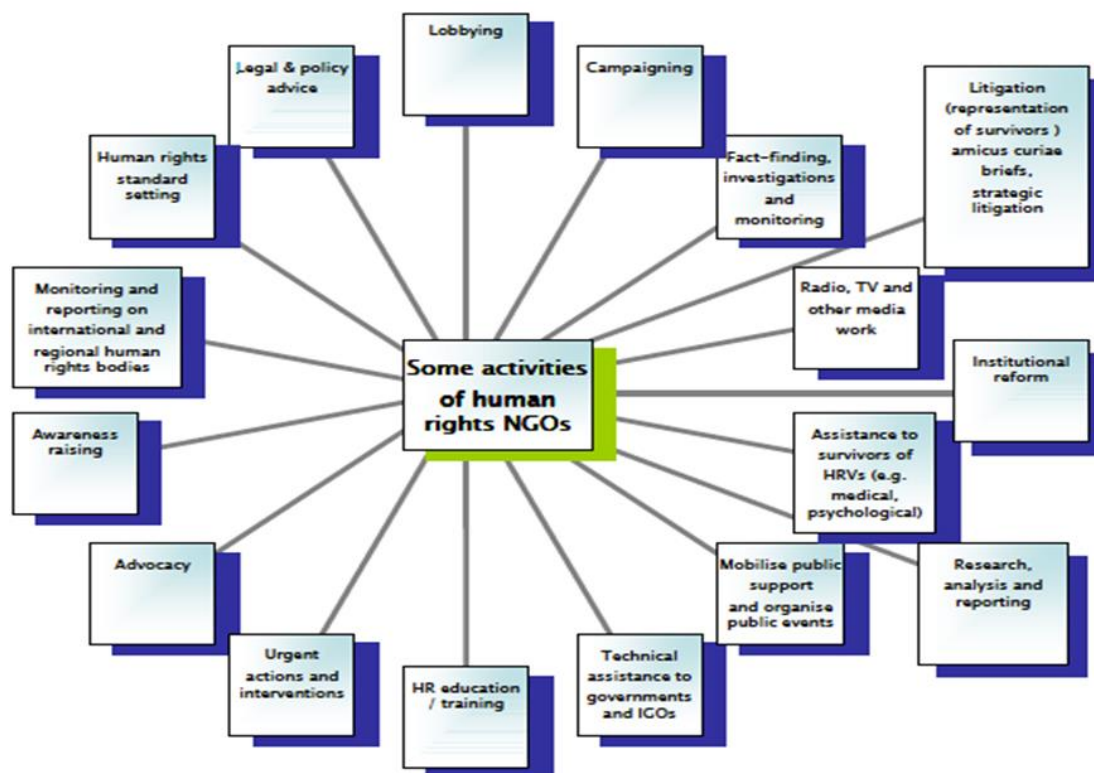
Reproduced from Avllias Bantekas, Lutz Oette, International Human Rights Law and Practice: (ICHRP, 2009)

Two of the partners CEDEHCA and CEIMM, dispose good expertise on a number of human rights issues. They have been involved in monitoring activities of Nicaragua's compliance on two international conventions but that work was done several years ago.

So why does SAIH not encourage partners to be engage in advocacy work related to human rights? The answer has a logic explanation SAIH's solidarity approach, combined with the partnership idea or principle, means that the partners in Nicaragua is viewed as having capacity to choose methodologies for their work without interference by SAIH. This also applies to knowledge of the overall political climate and specific political situations that may affect partners and, it could be assumed the right to education in RACCN and RACCS. An additional, explanation may be that SAIH's knowledge of specific tools for human rights promotion is limited, at least in terms involving international actors.

It is noted that the four partners of SAIH were more or less aligned with the FSLN in the beginning such as SAIH who also started in Nicaragua in solidarity. The historical background of roots of each organization has been formulated, inspired and endured by leaders that have been or still are sympathetic to the revolution. They were the intellectuals that stayed in Nicaragua to help in their development. It is to say that four partners maintain that they have autonomy from the central government are not influenced by the central government on the coast's issues and autonomy law protects their decisions. Each of the

SAIH partners are working with the general population and have no reservations of working with other political factions and open to dialogue from all participants. The partners emphasized that the Autonomy Law is their strength for them and that they in charge of the Autonomous Regions.

It should be noted that the political contexts in RACCS and RACCN are very different. In RACCS the evaluator observed a political climate characterize by strong support to FSLN and not much opposition, while in RACCN FSLN is challenged and heavily criticized with a strong opposition movement lead by YATAMA.

A worrying fact is that the overall human rights situation in Nicaragua has been deteriorating over the last decade. The government of President Daniel Ortega has increasingly engaged in authoritarian decision-making and tend primarily to have an aim to consolidate political power. This tendency is well described in a number of recognized human rights reports.[26]

An additional but related concern is that the government also tend to control appointments at increasingly lower levels in the public administration, including school principals. It appears to demand support and loyalty from state employees in general. The Atlantic coast's autonomy and people's identification with it makes control attempts tricky, and also vice versa, the citizens' opinion of and relations with the central government in Managua. One interviewee captured the situation quite well:

> "It is sad that that the central government ties it strings tighter and cronyism is definitely on the rise. This impedes critical debate and scrutiny of the right to education. On the other hand this government is aware that education is a key to our future and as I see it no other government has invested so much in the education sector as this one".

Both in the RACCN and RACCS the regional and central government have intervened in the hiring and firing of teachers and pressuring the elected officials to take decisions that they were uncomfortable to make.

The Sandinista government appears also to dislike unofficial attempts to produce independent statistics in the educational sector. Inviting or referring to international human rights mechanisms (e.g., CIDH or thematic UN thematic rapporteurs would place SAIH's partners in the camp of government opposition. The unavailability of information on education can be verified by accessing UNDP Human Development 2014 and there is no information available.

There is an office at the United Nations building in Managua dedicated to the Caribbean Coast on Education but it was impossible to interview the UN official. The only document available on Education in the RACCN and RACCS was the last United Nations Development (UNDP) Report on Education was published in 2003.

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[26] See for example Amnesty International report 2014/15
https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/nicaragua/report-nicaragua/ and US State Department Report 2013: http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220670.pdf.

So how get out of a situation that appears to have similarities with the famous catch 22 effect? SAIH wants the government to take a greater share of financing education, speed up qualitative indicators and improve general access to education for specifically discriminated indigenous and afro-descendant groups. Especially for girls and women while there are limited ways to measure progress as official statistics appears to be hided or at least not accessible to the public or the civil society organisations?

SAIH's partners recognize that there is a problem with lack of statistics but as they are used to produce reports to SAIH with data on outputs and outcomes at project-level, and not programme-level, the evaluators found no real awareness of the need to analyse the development of SEAR as a whole. Consequently there are not many efforts done to produce base-line data or benchmarks on education facts related availability (school infrastructure, teachers); accessibility (non-discrimination measures related to vulnerable and marginal groups); acceptability (development of teaching methods, culturally appropriate and of good quality) and much less adaptability (flexibility of education adapting to the needs of changing societies). The lack of openness by the government on statistics also creates possible discrepancies or even tensions between the regional and national education authorities.

The sustainability questions posed by SAIH in the ToR for this evaluation become very relevant for SAIH cooperation approach: Will the Nicaraguan State take over responsibilities for funding and support of education in the Atlantic region in the near future? How can SAIH support the work for this to happen? What is a realistic time horizon?

Detailed answers on these questions are found in chapter 6. However, they have also implications to SAIH's development cooperation approach, including reducing the present gap between some of the theoretical concepts in the Solidarity Strategy and the more practical cooperation aspects.

5.1.4 Conclusion

SAIH and partners have a need to acquire and keep updated records on statistics on how the educational sector has developed during at least the one or two latest decades, both in general and of course of the two autonomous regions. This would be consistent viewing education as a human right as set out in the current solidarity strategy. Quantitative and qualitative data should tell about progress or setbacks on a number of educational aspects. Some of them are mentioned above but also on level of education among the population broken down on gender, ages, geographical regions, and further about drop outs, teacher ratio (number of students per teacher), and teacher's educational level and so on. How the educational budget is structured is important for SAIH and the partners; the distribution of financial resources (for example does RACCN and RACCS have any budget privileges considering the region's special needs?).

Also relevant is how Nicaragua is doing in the regional (that is Latin America) educational quality outcome tests, such as Education Data for Decision Making (EDATAII), invented and managed by USAID and also the previously mentioned LLECE-tests *(Laboratorio*

Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación). Both assess Latin American students' ability to read and understand texts, solve mathematical tasks and problems in natural science. The consultant will give example of Nicaragua's achievement in these tests in chapter 6, also with some facts about the participation in RACCS and RACCN (in the case of EDATAII).

Both these international tests also include analysis of a number factors explaining children's ability to learn and they formulate recommendations to governments. This makes them highly relevant for SAIH and its partners even if the tests are limited to certain degrees (3 and 6). The test results and attached analytical reports reflect not only educational standards, government's priorities for the sector but also culture aspects on education. They provide SAIH and partners' with tools for advocacy and dialogue with the central government, education authorities, pertinent commissions in the legislative body (*Asamblea Nacional*), UN bodies like UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women and a number of other actors, including the business community (as education is also about economic competiveness). These sources can also be referred to without – for the moment - using a radical human rights discourse involving international accountability mechanisms. Nevertheless, the government should be reminded of that the citizens in RACCS and RACCN are right holders and the government is a duty bearer – the very basic human rights argument.

5.2 The partnership concept and its quality

5.2.1 Partnership definition

The question in ToR for the evaluators is "*How is the quality of the partner relationship and collaboration experienced by the partner organizations?*"

Partnership is a difficult concept in almost all development cooperation. Partnership is often vaguely defined, but represents often an honest attempt to reduce the power gap that inevitably arises between a donor and a recipient of financial resources. But what does partnership means in reality and how can results be identified?

In SAIH strategy papers the phrase "The work of SAIH will be based on equal partnerships" is repeated. Mutual respect, and critique, transparency, exchange of knowledge, contacts between people to inspire professional and economic cooperation beyond SAIH's commitments, are some of the content in the partnership.

When SAIH had Norwegian health professional staff in Nicaragua – it was the base for the solidarity cooperation in the early 1980' - the precondition for genuine partnership was easier to achieve compared to when the cooperation changed to the education sector, without Norwegian personnel in the field. Because of not only the daily face-to-face contacts but also the fact that the SAIH health workers did, if not represented, have close relations with a variety of Norwegian workplaces, communities and civil society organisations. Creating relations and networks was natural and easy. The political situation was also of course very important. The Sandinista Revolution 1979 represented a new hope for Latin

America and when the super-power USA began its war by proxy and did its own overt actions against Nicaragua the solidarity work intensified in Norway and many countries.

5.2.2 Partnership activities with quality according to partners

The partnership as a concept is still present in the present strategy but occupies less space in the document compared to its predecessor and consequently has fewer details. Even if it may not intentionally mean a lower priority and/or change of content, it appears to reflect the cooperation reality.

Partners understand the partnership similar terms as SAIH. "Horizontal relations", "Strategic collaboration between associates" and "A collaborative process to meet targets and share work approaches" were some of the answers the evaluators got when raising the definition question. One interesting, and more demanding understanding was provided from one partner citing Wikipedia: "equality in decision-making and mutual influence are the basic characteristics which differences partnership from any other relationship." It could be argued that this demanding type of partnership has been limited, as it requires very close communication between SAIH and partners almost on a daily or weekly base.

More important, however, is what the partnership has been about in concrete terms. At least three of the four partners were able to give account of many appreciated activities, some of them highlighted in qualitative terms. Specific mentions about quality related to partnership were exchanges of ideas and opportunities that are institutionalised, or in other words, where there are signed agreements between two or more institutions and with established, frequent and serious activities. One such partnership is between URACCAN, Oslo, and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA). It is a yearly coaching activity of URACCAN staff teaching at master level led by Professor Roy Klover at the HiOA's Institute for Journalism and Media Studies. The overall objective is to prepare URACCAN for future program at doctoral level. Beyond this small but ongoing activity sources consulted acknowledge that SAIH's long history supporting RACCS and RACCN has made it possible to connect partners in a number of exchange activities which would have had taken place without SAIH.

Another important qualitative example mentioned was Sør Trondelag University College (HIST) and the interdisciplinary workshops on qualitative research, a degree in nursing with a specialization in mental health and publication called Knots Mind.

CEIMM appreciated of a number partnership activities initiated by SAIH and FOKUS between 2003 and 2010. Notably the exchange and educational meeting held in Bolivia, from which the intercultural gender perspective emerged for the first time and the conference of the 50th anniversary of SAIH allowed all four partners to learn about experiences in different African countries, which share cultural roots with many communities in the Atlantic region of Nicaragua. FADCANIC highlights the Youth Association Agreement between FADCNIC, LAG-Norway, and FRAYBA Mexico. Through this agreement, a number of local youth activists and social leaders from coastal communities' leaders have exchanged ideas on alternative methods of work in civil society.

5.2.3 Partnership is dwindling

If the partnership idea is well alive or vanishing depends on how you chose to view it. How should the current (2012-2017) strategy paper on partnership be interpreted in terms of actual ambitions or obligations to implement plans and activities with specific partnership content, beyond labels like solidarity, mutual respect and so on?

The number of activities on exchange of knowledge and ideas, networking between partners and so on has been dwindling. This may have several explanations, some of them one already being mentioned: not having permanent staff in Nicaragua and with, in relative terms, a small solidarity movement with Nicaragua in Norway. Other but related reasons may be the fact that Nicaragua no longer is a priority in Norway's developed cooperation and linked to the concerns about the situation for political and civil rights and the political orientation of Daniel Ortega's government, leaning towards regimes like the ones of Chavez/Maduro, Castro and Putin. This may affect enthusiasm and possibilities of institutions in Norway to engage in partnership-linked activities.

However, more important is probably the partner's few expressions to SAIH of demanding international or even national interchanges and the other way around: SAIH does not offering them to the same extent as during earlier periods.. Neither they are used much in SAIH's communication nor its advocacy work in Norway, which itself an indicator of the lower priority. In addition, factors like Internet, a huge source for all sorts of information, and costs could be an explanation. Travels to events in other countries are expensive.

If SAIH wants to re-vitalize the idea of partnership, all four partners should have a great share of responsibility. Networking should never be donor motivated, as they tend to be both ineffective in terms of commitment to results and, which are interrelated, inefficient in terms cost-benefit outcomes. This means that partners should be the driving force behind specific activities and commit themselves not to participate only, but also share knowledge and report to SAIH and others how it is done, in much more details than hitherto. This approach does not mean that SAIH should not present ideas or make proposals, rather the opposite: it should promote good sources on education experiences, statistics, research, networking and even donors. SAIH should promote and even condition support by demanding that partners continuously have a closer relation to authoritative educational experts, ranging from international organisations and institutions like UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to national NGO like EDUQUEMOS and Norwegian experts. More of such contacts would increase possibilities to keep alive the idea of partnership and improve partner's expertise on education and with this better project planning, implementation and reporting. Partner may state that such relations already exist but the evaluator could not trace them and they are definitely absent in reports.

6. Findings on impact and outcomes in Nicaragua and Norway

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 looks at the overall impact of 30 years of cooperation. Impact is here interpreted and defined in the terms as explained in sub-chapter 2.3.1. It is, the consultant believes, in accordance to what SAIH refers to results at program level. After identifying (sub-chapter 6.1) impacts at a structural level and more of indirect character of SAIH's cooperation than direct (which is necessarily not inferior) I move on to an analysis of SAIH's contribution of outcomes and outputs, as mentioned in ToR:[27]

Outcome:

- Youth have obtained the relevant knowledge and skills to be active participants in their multicultural societies

Outputs:

- Indigenous and afro-descendant youth have completed high quality intercultural higher education programmes.

- Indigenous and afro-descendant youth have received formal and informal education in women's rights, from an intercultural gender perspective.

- Children in target areas have improved access to qualified teachers and relevant teaching materials.

- Youth in target areas have improved access to education about environmentally sustainable practices in agriculture and forestry.

- Indigenous and afro-descendant youth have completed high quality intercultural leadership training programmes.

Most of these expected results are closely link to traditional educational indicators as defined and monitored by UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD and other organisations but with the difference, they have a clear focus on the particular situation and context on education in RACCS and RACCN. Universal access to and completion of primary education for children in extreme poverty and poverty, gender equality, expanding provision of early childhood care and education, education quality, teachers/student ratio and adequate infrastructure are.

These factors are essential for assessing the status of SEAR. To assess such outcomes and outputs the evaluators use the four A-framework (AAAA, see footnote 4) which has a rights-oriented perspective: the right to an education that is available, accessible, appropriate and of good quality in relation to cultural and linguistic context and finally has the capacity to adapt to changes in the society. Although the facts and figures in this assessment of SEARs development only pretend to present a small fragment from studies and official statistics. I believe it is important to include them in this report to point to an important finding:

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[27] Terms of Reference, p. 2.

partners do not report on development of SEAR with a helicopter or holistic perspective and they do not aggregate different results to get this overview. Afterward I intend to give specific responses to issues such as youth and women in decision making processes sexual and reproductive rights and finally the issue of partner's participation in the autonomy process (subchapters 6.4 to 6.6). Finally, I analyse the question of partner's participation in the autonomy process (6.7).

6.2 Impact elements of SAIH's early presence

6.2.1 The solidarity movement in Norway

Derived from interviews with former members of SAIH's medical teams in Nicaragua, in earlier evaluations, personal observations, experiences, and a group evaluation-taking place in June 2015, some general impact and outcome elements have been highlighted. Several former members of the SAIH medical teams have a very modest opinion about the impact of their work and presence.

- The SAIH team in Nicaragua and SAIH in Norway and Norwegian university campuses had an important impact on the solidarity engagement in Norway and the analysis of the specific complexity of the conflict in the Atlantic regions. Team members contributed with interviews and articles in Norwegian media and enhanced the quality of response from the solidarity organizations (the Nicaragua Committee and the Latin America Groups – LAG).

- What was perceived from the outset as a solidarity mission with the Sandinista Revolution, became over the years less burdened with ideological reasons to stay on, but rather as a solidarity with a population in need, including the need to end the suffering of armed conflict and the establishment of political autonomy. Very few international organizations have stayed through the processes of political change in Nicaragua the way SAIH has done, and with the ability to adapt adequately to the new situations and needs.

- The 15 individual members of the SAIH teams and family members – have left behind fond memories among many colleagues, patients, friends and families, especially in and around Puerto Cabezas (Bilwi). Moreover, the team members have had tremendous experiences that have marked their motivations and interests since. Several persons interviewed during this evaluation in Puerto Cabezas (Bilwi) remember with fondness almost all the 15 members and their families, and they are impressed not only by their courage and interest to come here to work, but that they even come back to visit on personal vacations. Some former team members have also organized study trips to the region.

6.2.2 The health sector

- SAIH early expressed the interest and willingness to develop and even revitalize professional health services in the region. Nevertheless, SAIH's efforts were not patronizing or service but providing cooperation. The development of proper human

resources and institutions had a long-term effect and reflected the belief in the preventive rather than the curative emphasis on health care. This quality reflected in the fact that many of the locals approached during this evaluation also refer to the human quality of the team members, and not only to their medical skills.

- Initiatives like the nursing school, Clinica Bilwi, the Tuberculosis Program and facilities for the teachers' union ANDEN, are still functioning and constitute a lasting impact of SAIH's presence in RACCN.

6.3 Impact of SAIH's education work

6.3.1 Creating and strengthening of SEAR

- The most important impact that SAIH should be proud of is the contribution to the very establishment of SEAR as educational legal sub-system with constitutional rank based on autonomy and decentralisation considering particular contexts and condition. The main work to design, propose and get the approval of SEAR in the congress was done in the mid 90's. SEAR was in the words of one leading researcher on education in Nicaragua:

  "(---) the result of a history of struggle through the claims of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants of the Caribbean coast for their right to a qualitative education, relevant to its multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural reality."[28]

Article 41 in Nicaragua's general law of education give further details about the character of SEAR, being a "participative model" with an autonomous and decentralised managing of the educational realities, needs, aspirations and priorities for the multilingual, multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural population. With constitutional reforms 1987 and 2014 and with incorporation 2006 in National Educational System (law 582) SEAR got full judicial force passing the power to regional authorities to lead, organise and regulate the education in the two regions. Several leaders linked to FADCANIC and URACCAN at institutional level, and particularly it's Institute of Linguistic Promotion and Cultural Revitalisation (IPILC) has been recognised being the leading architects behind both the initial idea of SEAR and during different steps of strengthening it and other related laws for the region. In the words of one interviewee:

  "CEDEHCA, FADCANIC and URACCAN were at the forefront in the development of the Regional Autonomous Education System (SEAR) and later led the advocacy efforts to incorporate the SEAR into the Nicaragua General Education Law in 2005. Likewise, CEDEHCA promoted the articles of the Nicaragua Penal Code that defines and penalizes racism and discrimination as a crime. Law 445 and other laws establishing the Legal Framework of the Autonomy Process were promoted and approved in similar ways."

In fact, URACCAN report the achievement of having contributed to the establishment SEAR is the 2006-2008 triannual report to SAIH as an accompaniment or activity as any other! The

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[28] Informe de Progreso Educativo. Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y Equidad para la Autonomía, p. 9.

lack of presenting a ranking or categorisation of results in reporting by partners to SAIH is a common problem and linked to weak planning frameworks. This observation is further exemplified and discussed in chapter 8.

6.3.2 Education is a priority in the political agenda

- SAIH and its four partners have contributed significantly to make the right to education to one of the most political priorities in RACCS and RACCN, just as the architects or visionaries of the autonomy wanted. This impact is of course linked to the previous impact – the making and supposedly strengthening of SEAR but also the sum of a wide range of aggregated results at planning level – finding the right partners – and output and outcome level produced by SAIH supported projects. Some of outcomes are teachers training, Wawashang boarding school, the development of URACCAN, empowerment of young people informal training, partner's participation in international networks and other activities. This impact has also been achieved together with others, donor agencies but mostly a cluster of local leaders in the autonomy regions. Factors such as the Millennium Development Goal no. 2 – to achieve universal primary education – has also played a role. As the right to education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights, this achievement is highly important for the overall development in RACCS and RACCN.

6.3.3 The establishment of URACCAN

- SAIH took part in the process to create a second university in the autonomous regions, mainly through its support to FADCANIC. The same persons who promoted the creation of SEAR closely involved in the establishment of URACCAN, which history dates back to mid-1970's and plans took shape 1980 when the dominating state university, UNAM, decided to close its extension in the Atlantic Region. [29] After that, it took 16 years before the dream was fulfilled. URACCAN is, I believe, is an impact itself in various ways. First, all the research shows that establishing universities in regions deprived of social and economic development create number of opportunities – from the most obvious – new and more challenging education - to business and job development. Universities raises knowledge based professions and it boosts self-confidence among citizens, companies and authorities, just to mention a few. The consultant believes this has happened in RACCS and RACCN because of URACCAN, despite whatever weaknesses and problems the university has. SAIH has played an important role during at least 17 years of cooperation, supporting a wide range of projects and ideas such as the establishment of CEIMM, and pushing for maintaining the educational model based on the multilingual, intercultural communitarian reality. Although the evaluators did not assess URACCAN's academic quality, its importance cannot be overvalued.

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[29] For a more complete history, see URACCANs webpage: http://190.184.62.99/content/rese%C3%B1a-hist%C3%B3rica-institucional.

6.3.4 Strengthening the capacity and self-confidence of partners and authorities

The commitment by SAIH to the region during 30 years has strengthened the capacity in general of the four partners and other actors in the region, including authorities related to promote and negotiate different aspects of the autonomy. Increased capacity has produced more self-confidence and self-awareness among a wide range of leaders and officials at political, administrative and social level in RACCS and RACCN. Partners are mostly well equipped to promote and to negotiate on issues that are key to the modernisation and development of the region (including law making and budget issues), considering regional and local cultures, languages and natural resources. Numerous interviews showed strong identification with the human and social development of the region, which in general has been positive. Summarized in the following quote from an interview: "Yes, I am identified with FSLN but primarily with my region, first of all I am a Costeño and we should stick together to create a better future".

The sort of long-term international accompaniment - based on solidarity and perseverance – providing financial, moral and political support to partners should not be underestimated in a region deprived of overall development. Ordinary citizens and their leaders in such environments are vulnerable to political pressure and human rights violations because of deep-rooted discrimination, lack of educated human resources, modern infrastructure and communications. Organising people in such circumstances is hard itself and with a mosaic of different minority groups even harder.[30]

6.4 Supporting SEAR, specific outcomes using the AAAA-framework

6.4.1 Is education more available?

In the UNESCO flagship publication, Education for All 2015, Nicaragua is mentioned as being one of the Latin-American countries - together with Bolivia, Guatemala and Surinam - that has made "tremendous progress in reducing the number of poor children who have never been to school".[31] This refers national level and there is definitely a large contribution from RACCS and RACCN to this improvement. Expanded education budgets, investing in school construction, reducing or eliminating fees and promoting girls' access to education are the most important explanations given by UNESCO. SAIH has through its partners promoted most of these aspects in RACCN and RACCS, maybe with FADCANIC and URACCAN as the most prominent ones. Mentioning Latin America as a good example, UNESCO also says that curricular reforms targeting indigenous populations are vital tools to promote schooling among these groups, which is precisely the key feature in SAIH's programs and strategies over the years. So apparently, there is no need for a discussion on relevance of the programs with this regard. It is very high. (On intercultural, bi- and multilingual education, see further 6.3.2).

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[30] Paolo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher and educator, referred to these circumstances as "the culture of silence" where the oppressed were trapped in a negative, silenced and suppressed self-image. It is caused by a system of dominant social relations and where conditions to organize resistance do not exist. See http://www.pedagogyoftheoppressed.com/about/.

[31] EFA Global Monitoring Report, Education for all 200-2015, Achievements and Challenges, p 79.

Increasing the availability of education does not solve illiteracy and lack of knowledge, skills and capacities itself, but it put pressure on governments to give priority to education in general with a number of spin-off effects which are good for development, including a culture of reading and research, still not very present in Nicaragua.

GRAPH 3: Net rate enrolment primary school: RACS comparison national level (2004-2013)
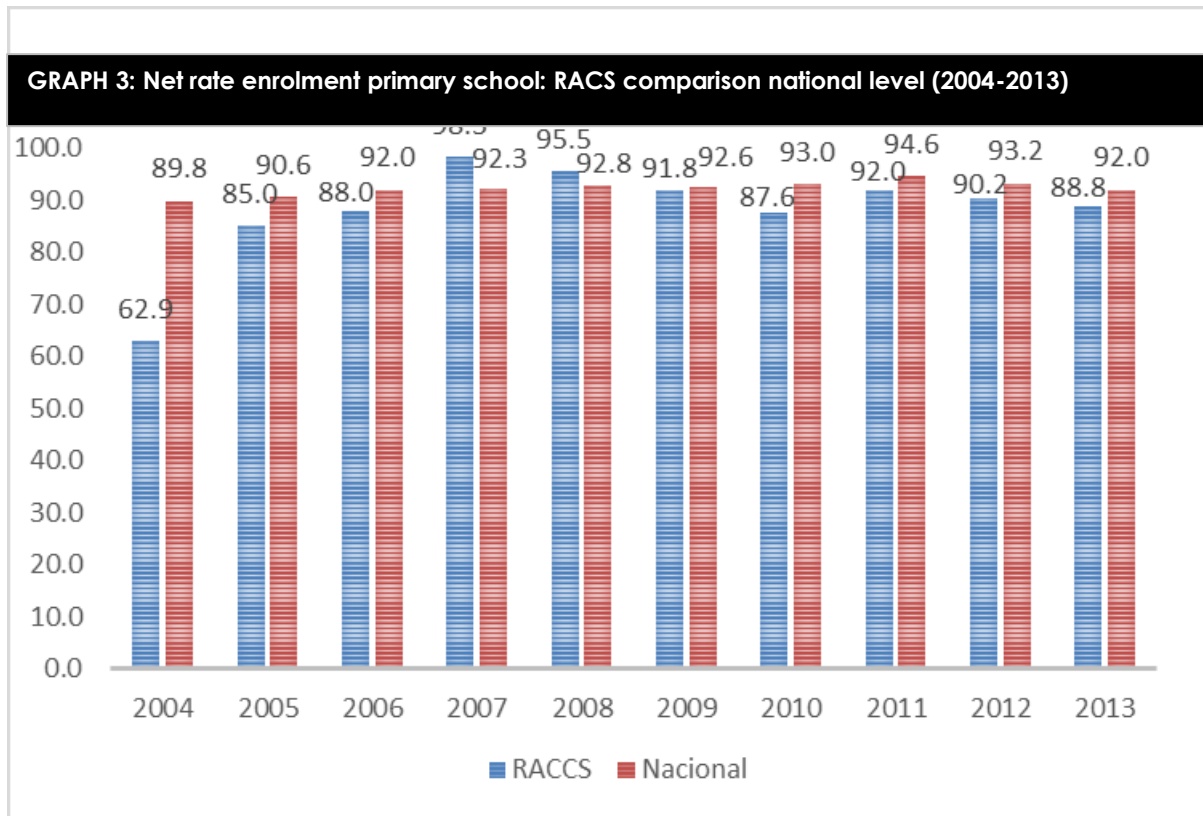
Source: Informe de Progreso Educativo. Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y Equidad para la Autonomía.

Graph 3 shows a significant increase of net enrolment in primary level in RACCS, the only of the two autonomous regions were the evaluation team found data with a comparison at national level. Enrolment grew during ten years from 62, 9 % to 88, 8 %, while national level experienced an increase of two percentage points (from 89, 8 to 92 %). A similar pattern in RACCS was found for secondary school: 2004 only 17, 8 % of the children were enrolled in secondary school compared to 39, 9 % as average at national level. 2013 the figures were 34.2 for RACCS – which doubled in secondary student population – and 50, 2 for Nicaragua as a whole.

Graph 3 shows also that enrolment rate for primary school was higher in the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012 compared to 2013. The research lead by URACCAN and EDUQUEMOS explains variations with the implementation of temporary social programs, financed by the World Food Program (WFP), the World Bank (WB) and others, where people in extreme poverty were given food packages and education materials with a condition that children were attending primary school. Campaigns by the Regional government and Non-Governmental Organisations are also mentioned as positive elements.

To reach all groups in the autonomous regions not enrolled in any sort of school is a complex due to demographic dispersion, lack of communication and transport costs, the study conclude.

Participation in secondary level has not declined over the years although 34 % for RACCS (2013) is of course not satisfying.[32] From both a rights and a development perspective increased enrolment and fulfilment of secondary level is extremely important: there is consensus among the international educational organizations that the average population has should complete minimum 10 years of education to overcome poverty and advance development. Several of the youth interviewed by the team was very aware of the need to finish secondary school to be able to be attractive on the labour market, even for low skilled jobs in the service sector.

Continuing efforts to increase secondary level attention are also important because of what researchers in both education and on demography are referring to as the demographic dividend. That is a long but temporary period when the growth of people in potentially productive age (15-59 years) is larger than the growth of non-productive segments, such as children under 15 and adults over 60. More than 100,000 Nicaraguans between 15 and 25 years are coming in to the labour market every year until 2035. To make them productive is a vital macroeconomic issue for any country even affecting economic growth. [33]

Another big challenge for the government is to continue to reduce illiteracy rates, which has been successful but still is more than the double in at least RACCS compared to average figure in Nicaragua: 22, 9 % vis-a-vis 10, 5 %. According to the researchers, the highest levels are among indigenous populations, and overcoming their illiteracy demand persistent programs. A shocking 31 % of the rural inhabitants in RACCS were illiterates 2012, according to the national population survey, quoted by EDUQUEMOS and URACCAN.

Unfortunately, this type of report has not been completed for the RACCN during the elaboration of this report. Even so, as described by the Regional Office of the UNICEF and UNDP in 2014 that are efforts being done but the progress is very slow. This reconfirms that the education in both autonomous regions lag behind the national educational system.

6.4.2 Is education _accessible_ and if yes for whom?

The access to education has increased significantly if not dramatically during the period when SAIH has been devoted to the education sector. All available data sources show this. Most significant changes can be said to have occurred tertiary level, with the establishment of URACCAN and BICU- the regions own universities – as the most obvious expression of this improvement. With all their limitations they are real universities with thousands of young people studies full time at different campuses and not, as in many other places in

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[32] Informe de Progreso Educativo. Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y Equidad para la Autonomía, p. 9.

[33] See United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in "_El bono demográfico en Nicaragua: Una oportunidad para el desarrollo (UNFPA 2013)_", p. 6, and "_Informe de Progreso Educativo. Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y Equidad para la Autonomía_" (p. 14.)

Central America, "garage"-universities with 20 plastic chairs and a signboard copying names as Harvard and Oxford. The attractiveness and accessibility of URACCAN is also related to other opportunities for young people, being organised in student associations, engage in cultural and media work in cities and smaller communities. Such services have SAIH promoted and financed with its cooperation increasing access-opportunities.

The other type of education with significant improvement of access is related to kindergarten or pre-school-services. Available data in RACCS shows that pre-school coverage increased from 29 % to 39 % between 2005 and 2013. Access is lower in small municipalities than large ones. The problem is small communities is both the lack of existence of pre-schools and the fact that parents living with higher levels of poverty cannot and do not demand this important service.

Poverty also affects the number of years attending school, as Graph 4 shows.

Therefore, poverty and living in rural areas affects access to education and the most excluded groups are indigenous and afro-descendant populations. If SAIH at a program level wants to contribute to SEAR's strengthening in this aspect, which I believe is relevant and important, partners should be encouraged to devote resources to advocate and monitor the development of accessibility.
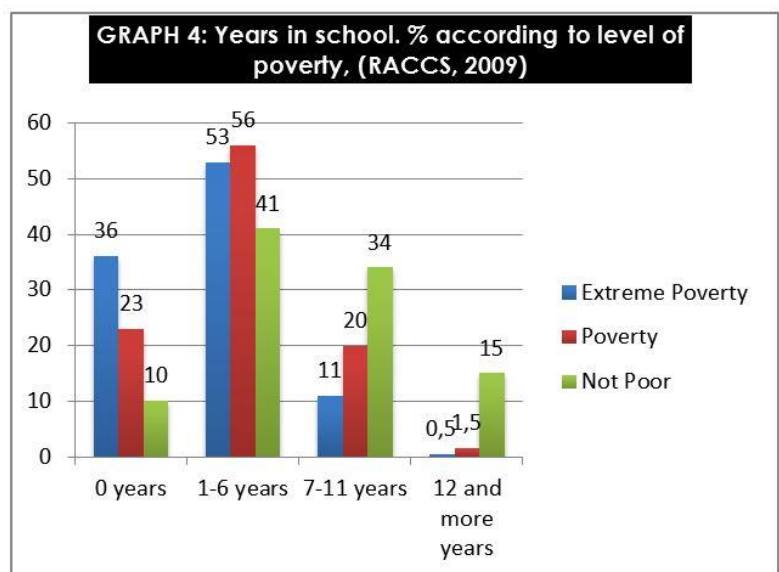
Source: The study "Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y equidad para la autonomía" (EDUQUEMOS/URACCAN/IBIS/Fundación Telefónica, 2015).

6.4.3 Is education accepted, cultural appropriated and of good quality?

Acceptance and the evolvement of intercultural and bilingual education.
In general, terms education in RACCS and RACCN has a good level of acceptance, which also means that the SEAR, also in general terms, has been successful from an intercultural perspective. More and more youth attend secondary school and with this, the mix of ethnic minorities is growing. The main evidence of this is of course increased coverage and attendance, lower dropouts and other facts on education that a number of written sources tell about. The number of school years in the RACCS has risen from an average of 3,2 years (national level 5,2 years) in 2005 to 5,4 years (national level 6,5 years) in 2012. As earlier shown result RACCS is here doing better that the national average, although the region still lacks behind many other departments. The previously mentioned report *Informe de progreso educativo* (of RACCS) refers to the only national study on living conditions[34] that put

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[34] The national survey on living condiciones, Encuesta Nacional de demografía y Salud (ENDESA, 2009)

questions on why families not send their children to schools. 43 % of the families whose children did not attend pre-school said it was "not important", while 22 % said it was "too far". The first reason for not sending their children primary school was that the child "was not interested" (39 %) followed by the child "has not work in the field" followed by the argument "domestic work" (5 %).[35]

Although the survey is six years old (2009) it may give some ideas of attitudes affecting the possibilities to increase primary school acceptance by parents in both RACCS and RACCN.

More important for SAIH's cooperation is the evolution of the main purposes of the program as well as the whole idea with SEAR: improving access and the quality of intercultural bilingual education, also recognised by among others UNESCO as a key factor to achieve the goal of universal primary education and contribute to poverty reduction.

Inter-culturalism is to respect, accept and bridge individuals and groups from different backgrounds, not only ethnic groups. It is about achieving social equality, the right to be treated like everyone else, regardless of gender, disability, origin or sexual orientation. For ethnic groups, it is the recognition of culture and the right to equal participation in mainstream society.[36] When tolerance and cooperation is strong, it has a positive effect on trust in a society, which also is a condition for the development and maintenance of social capital, in other words, "expected collective or economic benefits derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups".[37] Societies with dense bonding social capital have strong participatory democracy and lower levels of conflict.

Therefore, the strong focus on inter-culturalism has been very relevant. As it is a complex, qualitative maybe even floating concept.

There were two very vivid examples during the interviewing in the RACCN regarding the importance of factoring in the idea of inter-culturalism in education. One visionary who also has instructed medical students at URRACAN stated that the body is not just having a physical state but an emotional and mental state as well. To heal someone is to understand who he or she is and where he or she comes from, just the sickness. His example was "crazy sickness"/"Grisis sickness" which is described as a mass hysteria that can take over a Miskitu village's female population where they are running out of their homes screaming. The cause is unknown but that it exists is documented. The visionary went on to say that by educating the young doctors or in other professions is to have their own experts who understand the people from the RACCN and not having outside experts that charge large fees, and do not understand their needs and leave their bad recommendations. The RACCN and RACCS are now having their own caldron of experts that will be able to have a profound understanding and help their own people more efficiently.

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[35] Figures from ENDESA, 2009,

[36] There are many definitions of what is intercultural pedagogics or intercultural competence. This was picked from a master thesis labelled "To be teacher with intercultural competence", Södertörns högskola, a Swedish university: http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:473376/FULLTEXT01.pdf

[37] Source Wikipedia, based on texts by the US political scientist Robert Putnam. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_capital

The second example is the Rio Coco and the rest of the RACCN. There is even a division among the Miskitus. Those Miskitus, who live on the river, think very distinctly from the Miskitus that live the rest of the RACCN. The difference has to do with costumes, forms of transport and way of life. When speaking with the women organized by CEIMM and the director of the URRACAN in Waspam, both mentioned that their Miskitu students have had to learn to get along because they were often separating in groups depending if you were from a village along the river or if you were from the pampa. The Mayagnas that came from Upper Rio Coco and those who live in Rosita and Sahsa have a different story because they are from the same villages and were evacuated during the war to the interior near Rosita. The Mayagnas have a history of being on the river when they are in Bosawas or on the Rio Coco.

A CEHDECA-source made the same observation regarding a Rama community in RACCS that the habitants were falling ill. There had been some development of land and their belief was that retribution had to be made to the spirits for the erroneous way of carrying out the project. A shaman came in to carry out a purification ceremony and people became healthy again. Whether there is medical proof as to why people became sick, the medically trained doctors from the Pacific side could not cure the community. The understanding the importance of the river and the land and whom the Rama people are, is necessary for a holistic curing process.

One interviewee summarises:

> "In the 1980's antagonism between for example Miskitus and afro-decedents was widespread and harsh. Now it is very different, and for example URACCAN is an important tool for unity and consensus."[38]

SAIH's strong focus on bilingual education (EIB, acronym in Spanish PEBI in Nicaragua) has helped partners to continue to emphasize the importance of it. Because of mestizo penetration in both regions demographic composition are slowly changing increasing the risk to marginalise historic ethnic groups even further. The modernisation of the economy, featuring for example tourism and internet expansion, means both opportunities and threats to cultures. Unfortunately, this trend together with lack of incentives and resources form the central government are having a negative effect on offering bilingual education.

Voices:

> "We used to have four bilingual primary schools in Bluefields. Now there is only one but the need has not been reduced."

> "There are almost no training opportunities on bilingual education."

> "During the period 2000-2005 bilingual education was a priority for the government. That is not the case any longer. The number of teachers trained for bilingual education teaching is dwindling."

During the early 1990s the Ministry of Education with the assistance from Norway's Fredskorpset, Terra Nouva from Italy , the Maestra Rosa from Catalan and the

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[38] It should be said that this person does not work at URACCAN.

Interamerican Institute for Human Rights made a consorted effort to reignite the bilingual and intercultural program in the RACCN which a tremendous opposition from the central and even regional Ministry of Education. This cooperation has evolved a masters' program in URACCAN's Rosita filial who has over 20 educators graduated with a degree in Bilingual and Intercultural Education working inside the Ministry of Education, in non-governmental organizations and local governments. The luxury of having even on a primary level for a teacher with a master's degree is quite an accomplishment even though these graduates could in fact could be utilized perhaps giving classes at the URRACAN or at a high school level. It should be noted that there are persons from RACCS that also is studying in the master's program.

According to UNESCO at least five larger donor agencies devoted to education has left Nicaragua – among those are several Nordic bilateral country programs (Sida, Danida, NORAD and Finnida). The evaluators met one school principal who stated there is a voluntary effort to write a new official policy for bilingual education for the Atlantic region in the RACCS regarding the use of Creole and King James English, which has been ongoing since the 1990s. It appears to be slow process without any public resources for it and therefore with uncertain outcome.

Having said this there is considerable continued education and other forms of promoting bilingual education, the far most important one are the BA and Master programs in bilingual at URACCAN. The national council of university now is permitting indigenous students to take their final oral examination in their native language. One case that was very particular was a young graduate proudly told the story that she did her final exam in Miskitu. She said she felt very relieved to be able to express herself more clearly and succinct. When she was asked, which degree she graduated from, she replied that her BA was in Spanish.

What remains to be better monitored and reported is how the bilingual education is available in schools in general.

Teachers quality and other aspects of quality in education
In all parts of the world it is recognized that trained and talent teachers is – together with government spending on education - are the most important factors for the quality of education.[39] SAIH's largest contribution to a strengthened autonomy is to have financed opportunities for teachers to improve knowledge and skills. All four partners have been involved in this activity, with FADCANIC as the most longstanding and important partner. FADCANIC has trained teachers since 1997. The evaluators have at least three sources – independently from each other - supporting our conclusion that training of teachers has been very successful.

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39 See Executive Summary in "PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV) Resources, Policies and Practices" (OECD, Paris, 2013).

First is a self-assessment by trained teachers in RACCS. They were more or less randomly selected by the consultant, using the only criteria that they were trained to obtain the titles at different years and accessible to the evaluators.

Interviews with trained teachers, also others not included in table 7, showed a strong commitment to their region and their communities. "94 % of the teachers we train stay in their communities", said one of our interviewees.

Another comment was "Even though the trained teacher from rural communities get offers from other education institutions most of them stay. A formal title is very attractive on the labour market."

Conversations also showed awareness of the wider scope of having teachers with good quality. One person declared:

"SAIH has given us the opportunity to find and create talents to improve our autonomy".

Another affirmed: "Without SAIH's support 90 per cent of teachers would have been untrained."

Teachers showed great awareness of the need to further strengthening SEAR as a fundamental instrument to overcome discrimination and slow economic and social development. In addition, a continuous need to work for women's leadership was present in the interviews. In some communities, men's abandonment of their families, leaving mothers with a heavy burden of responsibility, are sky high.

TABLE 7: FADCANIC teachers training project in RACCS: Qualitative self-assessment by empirical teachers trained to obtain formal teacher title			
Who	Graduation year	Position 2015	Comments
01	2004	School Director	It was a great opportunity to participate in the training. I learned a lot, new teaching methods and I got a teacher employment with the Ministry for Education. I was raised up in a Creole family I am aware of what sometimes is their children's special needs.
02	2009	Teacher	I would say that the most important with the training efforts are not related to my person but the fact that it reached out to the rural communities where teacher's education was and sometime still is.
03	1998	School director	I studied three years every Saturday to get my title and was very happy with the training as it gave me a formal title. To have it is now demanded by MINED before your get your employment. After some years, I studied at Autonomy University of Nicaragua and took a master.
04	2008	Teacher	It was a sacrifice but necessary to give the children in this region better attention. Before the training I did not manage pedagogics and psychology, both key to be a good teacher
05	2001	Vice school director	SAIH with this support has given us the opportunity to discover and create young talents, especially to improve our autonomy.
Source: Interviews by the team leader of the evaluation			

Education is, as in all countries, the most important tool for employment, other economic opportunities and agency in general.

A second source for the recognition that training of empirical teachers has been successful is a mentioned and very recent (2015) published investigation by EDUQUEMOS and URACCAN, supported by IBIS Denmark and Telefonica Foundation. The overall assessment of the development of what is labelled teachers career states that there has been advancement of teachers quality at three levels studied, pre-primary (or kindergarten),

primary and secondary schools, although it is still insufficient. The lead researcher, Cephas Asencio Flórez, found that the numerical gap of empirical teachers (without training to get title) vis-a-vis formally educated teachers between RACCS and national level has reduced, an indicator that this aspect of SEAR is moving in the right direction. Moreover, the speed to reduce the rate of teachers without formal education is faster in RACCS than in the rest of Nicaragua. Graph 5 shows this reduction, comparing 2005 with 2013.
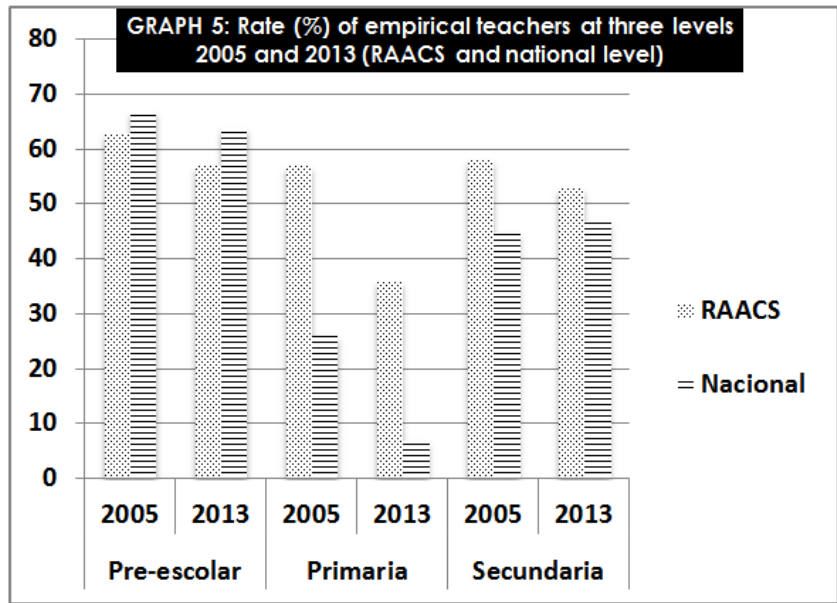
GRAPH 5: Rate (%) of empirical teachers at three levels 2005 and 2013 (RAACS and national level)

Source: The study "Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y equidad para la autonomía." (EDUQUEMOS/URACCAN/IBIS/Fundación Telefónica, 2015).

There are fewer empirical/untrained teachers, those are without having an exam from formal teachers schools ("Escuelas Normales") at all are three levels. At the same time, despite that exam from teachers schools is a formal requirement, the government continues to recruit empirical teachers, according to several of our sources. It is unknown if this is related lack of available trained teachers, lack of financial resources, nepotism or "clientelism" but it should worry SAIH and its partners and should be a topic to investigate or keep records of.

Some teachers are employed by the municipalities, are often paid very low salaries and even on a volunteer basis. The study from EDUQUEMOS-URACCAN recommends that training strategies should be intensified, especially related to training of teachers at pre-primary level and bilingual education. Continued coordination between the Regional Secretary of Education and actors like FADCANIC and URACCAN is important in this regard. The main problem according to the study is lack of public investment. Nicaragua has reached 4% of BNP on spending on education but not 6 or even 7 % as a more ambitious international goal has set. (Norway spends more or less 6,5-6,9 % of its GDP on education).[40]

A third source is UNESCOs Education for All 2015 study, the flagship tool for knowledge, analysis and statistics on education. Nicaragua has made progress in elevating the number and proportion of trained teachers (53 % of total at secondary level). However, the final number is still well below the average in Latin America.

[40] See statist9ics from the World Bank: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GB.ZS

It is beyond this evaluation to make an overall assessment of the quality of education. According to available statistics, it is clear that students in RACCS and RACCN still perform below the average in Nicaragua in many subjects, due to higher levels of poverty, and especially extreme poverty in some distant rural areas.

The most advanced and detailed study on student's performance on the Atlantic Coast is the so-called Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). Last available study is from late 2009 with results presented in 2010. It was financed by the World Bank and contains very detailed data on reading and understanding capabilities of 1-3 grade Spanish, Miskitu, Creole and Panamakha-speaking pupils in both RACCN and RACCS. The report contains several dozens of tables and data on details such as understanding of different letters, words, short texts per grade and language and even analysis on student family background and motivation. It is clear that Miskitu, Creole and Panamakha speaking children were in great disadvantage in the first and second grade but they perform almost as good as children from Spanish speaking families in the third grade, especially when having access to bilingual education from start. Therefore, the test is, as one presentation put it, "not really about student's capacity but rather the qualitative opportunities the Nicaraguan state gives them to study in their own language."

If SAIH's and partners objectives coincide - to strengthening SEAR as qualitative education system - this sort of studies and evaluations should be promoted and used, both for monitoring reasons and for an intensified and qualitative dialogue with the Ministry of Education and at university level the National University Council (*Consejo Nacional Universitario, CNU*).

It should be relevant for SAIH and partners to monitor how schools and universities perform over time, also in comparison to the rest of Nicaragua and even other countries. For this recommendation, I believe it is important to look at all sorts of sources. This appears not to have been the case so during the past years.

6.4.4 Is education adapted to needs and changing societies

This topic is probably where the evaluators received most critique from a good number of sources. They had in common that both secondary and university education, and specially URACCAN, was not enough adapted to the prevailing and changing reality in Nicaragua's Caribbean. There is a huge need for knowledge and skills of technical and practical nature. Is there really a labour market for secondary school and university graduates from subjects related within social sciences, sources asked the team? As one interviewee claimed:

> "Our costal and forest societies cannot absorb all these graduates thinking of career as a sociologist or historian".

6.4.5 The status of SEAR in RACCS, according to URACCAN/EDUQUEMOS research

With permission from the lead researchers, the evaluators below reproduce the table summarising the assessment of the status of SEAR in RACCS. A similar research is currently under way about RACCN, but not ready (28 August 2015). It gives an overview of education areas in terms of grades, and provides SAIH and project involved staff in partner

organisations with a comparative analysis, as trends. The right column with comments contains explanations for the assessment in each field.

The lead evaluator believes it is a good and illustrative example how SAIH and partners should approach an analysis of impact and outcomes at programme level, in this case on the most important overall objective, which is strengthening SEAR.

TABLE 8: Evaluation of trends in education sector in RACCS (2015)

AREA	GRADE	TREND	COMMENTS
Decentralisation of education through SEAR	Good	↔	SEAR as conceptual, political and legal educational system tool, is considered to be one of the most advanced in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, it shows signs of weakening and stagnation in its implementation, which should be subject of reflections, proposals and efforts by the actors and educational institutions in the RACCS. The current proposal, the seventh version of SEAR Plan represents a hope for their strengthening; but still no final decisions are taken support from the central level.
Access	Regular	↑	Regular net enrolment of preschool and secondary education is lower than the national averages; however, they have had significant growth. The net primary rate remains at 89 percent, similar to that of ten years ago. The most important progress is in secondary school and should serve as a reference to improve and sustain the gains at pre-school and primary school level. Literacy in the RACCS is still high; but it decreased significantly (22.9 percent).
Equity	Regular	↔	Regular schooling, although still below the national average, has grown in RACCS significantly. Bilingual Intercultural Education Program, however, has stalled overtures preschool and primary education, the need to strengthen intercultural bilingual education at all levels and forms, to represent the essence of the SEAR. Access to pre-school and primary is more rural. The less urban than the national level, favours a secondary endogenous rural development. Also women's education advantage, favouring gender equality. The quality of education is inequitable rural versus urban quality. Low rural school is also associated with poverty and dispersed communities.
Permanence	Regular	↑	Permanence is one of the greatest challenges of education in the RACCS. There are improvements in the survival of pre-schools. But still a clear challenge is to keep children especially in the first grade. At secondary school level there is also a large gap of permanence and requires a special plan for the first year. But there is a historic opportunity for improvements in access and control of abandonment. A recommendation is taking advantage of this trend by reforming to take advantage of the demographic dividend for regional development.
Learning tests	Poor	↔	RACCS has participated since 2006 in various international tests to measure learning outcomes of children in of early primary school grades in reading and math understanding. According to the national results, and to Caribbean Coast and some data related to RACS, there are large gaps to be closed, especially in the early grades in rural areas and public schools. There are encouraging signs, indicating progress from one grade to another.
Evaluation system	Poor	↔	The national government is committed to participate in international events and implement annual testing based learning curriculum. In both of these events students from RACS participate but the government does not report to SEAR about regional results of those tests, and neither participate in reflections and or decisions with the aim to curriculum or training, planning, statistics and others? RACCS (educational authorities) also lacks a system for educational information, since it does not have access to regional statistics nor has been trained to in an autonomous way to design, implement and decide on establishing a regional evaluation system of education.
Student curricula and teachers	Good	↓	The experience developed by RACCS for curriculum improvement is considered a benchmark to develop a pertinent and relevant educational offer taken into consideration socio-cultural reality. The lessons from this experience should guide the renovation and expansion of the unfinished experience. To be able to do this this it is necessary to deepen regionalization and educational autonomy.
Teachers career	Regular	↑	Quality teaching in SEAR has advanced, although is still insufficient. Strategies evolve to incorporate the intercultural bilingual dimensions through teaching methods in both bilingual and monolingual schools. Still there is a need to further develop education and training strategies in this field. Also of importance is to coordinate public policies to improve teacher's quality of life and make teaching a more prestigious profession.
Investment	Regular	↔	The researchers did not have access to recent years of budgets for education for primary and secondary education. Consequently there are no estimates about the resource allocation. However, indirectly calculated annually losses are considered at pre-school, primary and secondary levels as a result of drop-outs and repetitions. This fact could become lost profits to reinvest in other needs, as far as it will go surpassing shelling of tuition, with quality stocks.
Technical and professional careers	Regular	↔	There is a dramatic decline in offering basic and middle level technical careers while at the university level higher technical courses expand. The provision of higher education strives to be relevant in the social and economic contexts, with modest gains, as there is high unemployment among technicians and professionals. To take advantage of the demographic dividend to be strengthened and technical careers in line with the demands and trends of production and business sector and put them in tune with the major strategic projects.
Grading scale and trends in the table	Excellent Good Regular Poor Very poor	↑ Progressing ↔ No clear trend ↓ Regressing	

6.5 Empowerment of youth and agency

6.5.1 CEDEHCA/JENH

CEDEHCA and its youth branch JENH (*Jovenes Estableciendo Nuevos Horizontes*) is the only partner with a specific objective and mandate to empower youth. However as SAIH's entire program is about education it is quite obvious that all four partners are involved in activities aimed at strengthening young people's knowledge, capabilities and self-esteem and self-confidence.

The program objective is formulated as "youth has obtained the relevant knowledge and skills to be active participants in their multicultural societies". The achievement of this objective is met with a wide margin. The evaluators met a good number of young women and men from all the ethnic groups, with quite impressive knowledge and active in a variety of interrelated topics such as regional politics, communitarian development work, extra-curricular courses on employability and gender equality, research efforts, local journalism and communication, cultural activities and more. Spelling out what could be considered as one of the most important outcomes, one interviewee said:

> "The establishment of a Regional Secretariat of Youth within the political administration of RACCS and RACCN is entirely thanks to the work done by CEDEHCA-JENH. Now youth issues are higher up the political agenda".

This statement was confirmed by other sources, including focus groups. CEDEHCA-JENH work is hand in hand with the regional governments. Showing high political awareness one young leader said:

> "22 % of the members in the regional council in RACCS are in the range of 25-30 years. Our goal is to increase it to 30 % at next election"

Mainly thanks for CEDEHCA-JENH youth across de Atlantic coast frequently push for political participation, access to resources and keep organisations alive and active. Although in the latter case it was recognized that most organisations are loose and tend to be floating, probably due natural reasons (young people tend be on the move) and that geographical distances, lack of resources makes collective efforts difficult. It was recognized that CEDEHCA does not have presence in all municipalities in RACCN and RACCS. Although CEDEHCA's "*Escuela Movil de Liderazgo Juvenil Comunitario*, (Mobile Juvenile Community Leadership School), an important project component at least during 2013 and 2014, did cover 1260 young indigenous and afro-decedents habitants in 14 communities, the evaluators impression is that that most of activities take place in mayor towns such as Bluefields, Rosita, Waspam and Bilwi.

CEDEHCA has good capacity to train youth on a number of issues, such as sexual and reproductive rights and human rights in general. Training manuals have good quality. There is also an observatory on the situation for young indigenous and afro-decedents rights but it is unclear if rights refer to human rights or rights as defined by Nicaraguan law. When it comes to use tools for monitoring this makes a difference.

As in the case of other projects, the design of objectives and attached indicators make monitoring and evaluating of eventual outcomes and impact difficult as there is no distinction between different sorts of results, in terms of outputs, outcomes and impact. Much reporting is related to activities. Reporting that 65 % of the participants in Mobile Juvenile Community Leadership School did apply acquired skills should mean that CEDEHCA have been doing some sort of surveys or interviews but they are not reported. Without assessing or reflecting on what such use of knowledge leads to makes it difficult to aggregate results to search for impact. For example, it would be interesting to see an analysis of real outcomes for young people of regional policies for youth in RACCS and RACCN as CEDEHCA's the purpose of the observatory preciously are monitoring these policies.

6.5.2 FADCANIC's Wawashang Environmental and Agroforestry Educational Centre

The probably most important empowerment activity by FADCANIC is the boarding school and research centre, Wawashang Environmental and Agroforestry Educational Centre (CEAA).

Wawashang is located in Wawashang Nature Reserve in the municipality of Pearl Lagoon (RACCS). Between 200 and 300 youth from all the seven ethnic groups and predominantly from rural communities are studying and practicing agro-forestry, livestock and carpentry at four different levels. Most of them study a full-time in multiyear (2-5 years) programs. SAIH and other donors, such as USAID, finance the number of student's studies through what FADCANIC label scholarships, financing education, full boarding, necessary tools and clothes to young people whose economic background would make a similar experience impossible. A 28-hour long visit to the school the impression was a high degree of satisfaction among the students related to teachers' quality and commitment, learning outcomes on a number of mostly practical skills that are very useful for families and community economies. Excerpts from the conversation with six young students:

> Teachers here explain until we understand, and this is different from the other three schools I have attended.

> Teachers here are available all the time, and they have a lot of patience with us. They are like fathers for us.

> Wawashang agroforestry schools cover the entire region, which is very important as it give opportunities to everyone.

> The overall quality I believe reached 80 percent. To get to 100 we need more teachers.

> It is a scandal that the entire school only have five computers and poor access to internet is a big problem.

> It is very hard to live so long time far away from your family

It should be noted that FADCANIC is continuously improving infrastructure at CEAA, at the time of this evaluation Norway through the Embassy in Guatemala was financing a new

school building to improve lecture facilities, accommodation and recreational areas as part of a large cooperation agreement with FADCANIC.

Wawashang is an extremely important institution in many aspects, contributing to indirect but not less important aspects of empowerment. The geographic location was chosen by FADCANIC to function as a protection barrier to mainly illegal colonisation within the natural reserve, which creates serious conflicts in both RACCN and RACCS.

The centre is a leading research centre on breadfruit tree propagation, with significant results on yields and promotion of this crop for human food. It provides different services both close and distant communities to increase their capacity to manage natural resources in a sustainable way through experimentation, production of high quality seeds, genetic collection, conservation and scientific research, including for students at the two regional universities, URACCAN and BICU. Wawashang also is an important employer for especially women living close to the centre and a small but increasing number of study visitors tourists, are taken place.

Axel Borchgrevink in 2009 evaluated the school[41], with a very positive outcome. Some of the recommendations in the evaluation report seem to be still relevant. According to FADCANIC's own reporting 32 % of the students dropped out 2014[42], a high figure but lower than at the time of the 2009 evaluation (49 %). Another recommendation was "FADCANIC should seek to systematise a way of maintaining an overview of the careers", supposedly meaning that a mapping of former students employments, self-employments or further studies. The team member visiting CEAA was able to talk to staff at FADCANIC with the specific task to monitor students and (some aspects also their families) commitment, well-being, study performance in CEEA and career after exam. The database also considered criteria related to students family relation or situation, mainly socio-economic situation, risk of being exposed to violence and drugs and having experienced domestic violence) to be selected as beneficiary. These students are financed by USAID. FADCANIC had to, as a condition, to have a database with files of each student and his/her family. The monitoring staff financed by USAID within the project met with students more or less every trimester and continued contacts after exam. Although it could be discussed cost-benefit aspects of such detailed monitoring, FADCANIC staff acknowledged that this type of follow up was far more detailed than the one on the students financed by SAIH. FADCANIC staff believes that would be interesting to apply at least some aspects of the USAID monitoring system and have a better picture of not only the empowerment outcome on each individual passing through CEAA, but also as they as a collective are contributing to strengthening of SEAR and improving socio-economic situation of families and communities. This conclusion also applies to other empowerment projects and activities, especially CEDECHA but also URACCAN.

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[41] Evaluation of SAIH's Support for FADCANIC's Wawashang Environmental and Agroforestry Educational Centre (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2009).
[42] Proyecto CEAA-SAIH: Informe Anual 2014 (Enero-Diciembre 2014), p. 23.

6.5.3 The missing link 1: Aggregating empowerment results

The issue is how myriads of reported empowerment activities can aggregate into results in terms of outcomes and impacts beyond education for individuals. How are empowerments efforts contributing to the strengthening of the education system (SEAR) as a whole? If and how empowerment, including education, contributes to the transformation of the society in other aspects for groups, families, communities, municipalities etc.? For example, effects on youth unemployment, increased job opportunities, family income, poverty, and other aspects of development where education supposedly is important. While some overall objectives of the projects refers to the strengthening of SEAR as such (see table 2 and 3), planning, monitoring and reporting by partners over the years has mainly focus on quantitative outputs. There has been weak links to impact in terms of an improved education system as a whole (for an example how results could have been be designed, see table 8 above). One example of an exception is URACCAN's reporting about outcomes from the three-year (2006-2008) support. Linked to the general objective ("---present and future generations have developed capacities to guarantee conditions for decent lives---") there is an indicator labelled "Level of well-being, human development and incidence of human poverty". The attached text refers only conditions, which negatively affects poverty reduction and not with word project outcomes in this regards.

Especially FADCANIC are well aware of a need to show how project outputs terms of for example trained teachers and vocational training of youth have and positive effect of the above-mentioned aspects and on individuals and entire communities. The organisation also does so through short "life success stories" on posters and leaflets, also for entire communities. However, it is done mainly for other donors. It could easily have been done in reports to SAIH if requested and included in planning design.

6.5.4 The missing link 2: Analysing enabling and hindering conditions for empowerment results
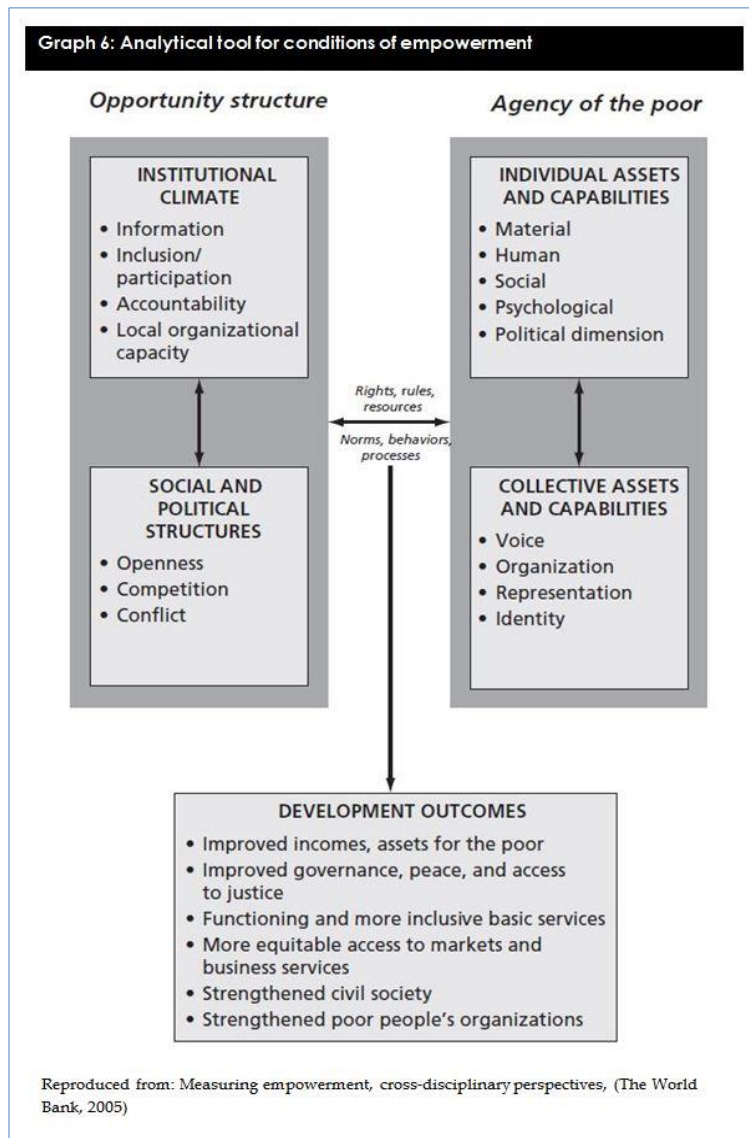
The achievement of empowerment results in terms of real opportunities for improved social and economic development always depends on the context. There is no doubt that education, and specifically formal education is a good empowerment tool in itself. However if education programs does not match labour market supply, or there are few or no job opportunities at all, and even worse, state and private investments are very limited, no natural resources to explore, the ruling elite is corrupt and taxes are not raised or distributed, empowerment of marginalised people will have less effect and take long time to produce desired results.

Partners have regularly shown weaknesses in describing existent obstacles for effective empowerment and there are few descriptions how empowerment activities lead to, for example, creation of more jobs.

The idea of analysing enabling and hindering or preventing empowerment and the related idea of agency is based on a model developed by senior World Bank specialist Deepa Narayan and presented in the book *Measuring Empowerment. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* (the World Bank, 2005). The model could well serve as an analytical and conceptual tool to

assess or measure effectiveness of empowerment activities, perfectly relevant for SAIH's cooperation. Graph 6 illustrates the basic features of the model, setting out two types of societal pillars: called "Opportunity structure" and "Agency of the poor". Each pillar has two building blocks. Related to "Opportunity structure" the building blocks are 1) "Institutional climate" (such as access to information, inclusion, participation, accountability and local organisational capacity) and 2) "Social and political structures" (such as openness, competition and degrees of conflict). Related to the second pillar – "Agency of the poor" – are individual and collective assets (such as voice, organisation, properties and others).

Without going into the model too deep, there are simple examples that the four partners could use to analyse, explain and consider in planning, monitoring, evaluation and – particularly – in reporting on empowerment outcomes. Here we do not refer to historical conditions of the Atlantic region but more specific and technical matters, for example investment in education and youth and social issues in general; the Atlantic region's share of state revenues, collection and distribution of national, regional and municipal taxes, investment on infrastructure, support to families and women in precarious conditions, enforcement of men's obligations to pay for children after divorce or abandonment etc., people's access to land and other property rights etc.

Graph 6: Analytical tool for conditions of empowerment

Reproduced from: Measuring empowerment, cross-disciplinary perspectives, (The World Bank, 2005)

Is this type of approach putting too high demand on SAIH and partners, it could be asked? The evaluators got different answers from partners related to this question.

> We are a small NGO with limited power and cannot bring miracles when it comes to influence the national government raising the education budget, said one interviewee.

Another had a different approach, including referring to a too weak political analysis by the evaluators.

A more profound analysis of the political situation of the Nicaragua Northern Caribbean Coast is required, particularly regarding to communal property rights.

Interviews and comments to this report showed that partners are aware of political, social, cultural and economic conditions in general and on particular issues, which enable and puts obstacles to empowerment efforts and how to assess them. SAIH has so far not enough considered such matters in earlier or current project design and neither in project/ activity monitoring and project result reporting. Introducing context analysis and specifying positive and negative conditions for empowerment of youth would improve projects, linked projects to a comprehensive program and put more focus of citizen's rights. The recommendation is not to have a too broad o deep analysis of every aspect in RACCS and RACCN affecting empowerment, but some key aspects such as budgets, taxes, public and private investment, job output and matching education output to job output. A good example of the latter is FADCANIC's plan to introduce new vocational training programs in the CEAA, which supposedly will contribute to reduce youth unemployment.

6.6 Outcomes on gender equality

Partners are involved in many efforts to improve gender equality, also with an intercultural perspective. CEIMM has been very active to promote and succeed in policy and strategy changes at political regional and municipal level, including contributing to reforming the autonomy law to improve gender issues and adapting other regional regulations to national laws, particularly to prevent, eliminate and punish violence against woman (VAW). The regional regulation recognizes that violence against women in any form is a manifestation of discrimination, which conceptually is advanced as it makes it both a crime and a human rights violation. CEIMM's annual reports to SAIH constitutes an impressive list of initiatives of and participation in networks, forums, conferences, courses, institutional policy and strategy work and accompaniments of women's networks both at regional and municipal level. Having said this, the evaluation identifies a number of weaknesses in project structure and CEIMM's reporting of results. As in other projects, there is a lack of differentiation of outputs outcomes and impact. There are many examples of CEIMM's promotion of and participation in women's networks (lawyers, psychologists and so on) but little is said of the capacity of these networks, if they are permanent, what kind of activities they perform, the frequency of such activities and what results they achieve. If other partners, such as URACCAN, have a tendency to report many figures (such as number of gradated students or trained teachers), with CEIMM the problem is the opposite – too little quantitative indicators, although there are some) and important but vague qualitative indicators. Table 6 gives a representative example of CEIMM's reporting.

CEIMM has definitely so far fulfilled its role as an academic institution promoting and advocating gender equality and women's rights in the wider society at all levels. The list of activities provided with the reporting from CEIMM to SAIH is very complete. However, information is lacking on how policies, strategies and laws are implemented in practice and what they mean for especially indigenous and afro-decedent women in RACCS and RACCN. For example, one very important issue for

TABLE 9: Example of CEIMM's reporting to SAIH (triannual report, 2013)		
Project objective (2010-2012)	*Indicators*	*Example of reported achievements*
The right to a life without violence of indigenous, Afro-descendent and mestizo women of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast is promoted and defended	Increase of the cognitive and organisational capacity of coast actors in procuring and protection woman's human rights, with emphasis on application of the right to personal integrity	Identification of the status of capacities of holders of both obligations and rights, as well as inclusion of these actors in the different initiatives encouraged in the project framework as well as other actors, are fundamental elements when propitiating progressive increase of the cognitive and organisational capacity of coast actors in providing justice. All these aspects were encouraged during the project period, providing follow up to the initiatives already promoted in the first two years and consolidation the arenas o debate, training and political advocacy.
	At least three Policies on prevention of Gender Violence and Justice for Women networks and approved by the Caribbean.	a) Approved URACCAN Intercultural Gender Policy; b) Policy of Gender Equality in the context of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Communities of RACCN c) Strategic Plans for current Regional Gender Policy of RACCS + Policy for the Prevention of and Attention to Gender Violence. d) Resolution of Regional Council (RACCS) on implementation of Law 779 (against VAW) + harmonisation of regional laws with the Penal Code. e) Political advocacy regarding governmental budget allocation by autonomous and municipal governments.

CEIMM and the other three partners has been and still is to combat violence against women. Key sources within CEIMM stated that they had made efforts to get information on statistics

There has been progress on laws, policies and other regulations, as well as promoting awareness about both these instruments and why the issue should be highly prioritized. However, none appears to think that monitoring, analysing and reporting on the development of Violence against Women (VAW) is important, that is – once again – a lack of helicopter perspective on the issue. In Bluefields one team member approached, the RACCS' headquarter for the Women's National Police Commissioner to get statistics. The staff was very helpful but due to a computer crash (and no back up of the information) they had only statistics for 2013, 2014 and first six months of 2015. Selected statistics are presented in table 7:

TABLE 10: Selected crimes against women in RACCS 2013-2015				
Year	Number of police complaints			
	Domestic violence	Sexual violence	Other crimes against physical integrity	Crime against property
2013	287	237	172	47
2014	224	227	187	69
2015 (Jan-June)	60	76	80	15
Source: Women's Police Commissioner, RACCS				

The statistics provided to the evaluator contain more data: a number of other crime categories, location of crime scene and victims domicile (down to municipality), number of cases send to prosecutors and more. According to official sources, especially CEDEHCA and CEIMM have been crucial actors to combat VAW:

> "CEIMM has been a pioneer related to advocate for public policies and CEDEHCA has played a role as a coordinator of a network for preventing youth violence, also in connection to sexual violence".

When the evaluator asked sources within CEIMM if the institution did monitor the development of VAW prevalence, given the fact of the intensive involvement in this problem, the answer was negative "as I have tried to but not have found statistics".

6.7 Participation in the autonomy process

Partner's participation in the autonomy process is significant and plays a dominant role in all projects and activities. In a historical context, the leadership in all four partners have played key roles in achieving the autonomy, both terms of political visions, laws, administrative and political institutional set up and obtaining financial resources to make it reality.

There are several ways to expose this commitment and involvement. Below is one try with selected but incomplete examples of different forms and subjects of participation. The list includes both information from interviews and examples from partner's reporting to SAIH over the years. Being a university, URACCAN has a privileged role.

- Partners deliver a large number of human resources at high level to regional authorities, not at least the Secretariats for Education, Secretary of Youth and Secretary of Indigenous and Afro-decedents issues. Officials highlighted this as being very important and numerous interviews with students and teachers confirmed.

- All four partners are consulted by the regional governments and participate in a number of commissions in the regional legislative bodies and the regional councils. The organizations are consulted not only on educational, youth and health issues but also on environment, bio diversity, employment, business gender and other topics.

- All four partners give advice and accompany different municipal councils and mayors in their struggle for financial and human resources, projects and resisting different form of threats from expansion of the agriculture frontier and extractive industries. There are also a large number of more or less permanent and temporary activities in both urban and rural communities. Some examples are CEDEHCA's project on graffiti and mural painting, engaging youth or FADCANIC's study-circle liked revitalization annual event in Pearl Lagoon. CEDEHCA has accomplished the empowerment for new leaders in communities and all the four communities of Bilwi, Bluefields, Rosita and Waspam with very clear and decisive workshops and guidance. This can be particularly seen in Bilwi of organizations that have branched out of CEDEHCA and attends directly to groups with particular needs such as LGBTI.

- The establishment of an observatory of the autonomy, led by URACCAN in cooperation with FADCANIC and CEDEHCA and involving a number of public institutions (as the Foreign Ministry, MINEX), academia (as Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University, BICU) and presumably other civil society.

- Agreement between URACCAN and Ministry of Family Affairs (MIFAMILIA) regarding systematisation of cultural practices in all municipalities in RACCN y RACCS

- Participation by all four partners in the broad network to combat violence against women, an initiative involving also the region councils of RACCN and RACCS. The Women's police unit in Bluefields acknowledged the importance of civil society participation in this struggle.

- Systematic accompaniment and participation – especially URACCAN - in the process of regionalization of health and education through negotiating with regional and national authorities meetings, attendance at forums, seminar and conferences. Examples are the review and adaptation of the Model of Family and Community Health (MOSAFC) and Reference System at Community level (SICO), in developing the Regional Annual Operating Plan of Health in conjunction with the Commission on Technical decentralization and the development of the Plan of Action of the Nicaraguan AIDS Commission (CONISIDA).

- Accompanying the Ministry of Health for the development of an anti-malaria project proposal for the Global Fund (URACCAN).

- Municipal Building Process Agendas (URACCAN).

- Instructional Planning with the Board of Education Rama and Creole Territory (URACCAN).

- Consultation on the regulation and use of the green turtle (URACCAN).

- Presentation of the project phases and the plan of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the exploration and exploitation of resources Energy Water Marine Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua by oil companies Noble Energy & MKJ (URACCAN).

- Accompaniment of four communities, Monkey Point, Eagle Point, Kahkabila and Set Net, for making a diagnosis on the "self-management capabilities". Gender Community (URACCAN).

- Establishment of commission for the implementation of the Plan" Violence Free School, with the national police in RACCN and RACCS (URACCAN).

- As seen above examples are abundant and during several non-Sandinista governments there were imminent threats to roll back the autonomy status of the Atlantic region but they were never materialised. Recognising that the autonomy in certain situations has to be defended, the consultant also believe that there is a risk that the autonomy becomes a mantra or political discourse full of rhetoric overshadowing the fact that economic and

social development has to in the forefront of all efforts. This is want citizens want and expected making regional authorities, political parties and civil society accountable.

6.8 Can progress be attributed to SAIH's engagement?

In general, it is very difficult to attribute results at impact level (defining impact as structural changes that are sustained over time[43]) to a specific donor when partners have several international development cooperation agencies and organisations as financial supporters. If project objectives, beneficiaries and project activities are similar, although not exact the same, it makes the attribution question even more difficult. Partners have of course a strong interest in attributing impact to every single donor but they often fails to do so because of weak project design, often not distinguishing activities, outputs, outcomes and impact from each other plus weak knowledge on how to aggregate results.

A clear pattern in all four partners reporting to SAIH there is confusion of what really constitutes an impact. For some partners it is a number of graduated students, for others that trained teachers are staying in their communities or that a law has been changed to reflect new realities after lobbying by civil society organisations.

One has to recognize that neither among researchers or development cooperation specialists there is a consensus what is in impact. For example for high ranking human rights experts with a legal background a new law is itself definitely an impact. Nevertheless, what happens with impact is if there is no administrative body or a budget to implement it or judges do not have a full understanding of the law. However, despite such possible shortcomings the evaluator believes that SAIH has contributed significantly to the sort of impacts as structural changes listed in sub-sub-chapter 6.3. On the other hand, to use the words in the ToR's questions progress can definitely attributed to SAIH's engagement but together with others. A more direct attribution to results is at outcome-level, such as the fact that especially FADCANIC but also URACCAN and CEDEHCA have trained teachers for so long. With this improving several aspects of education: increased number of teachers with formal title, especially in rural communities, better quality of teaching, increased understanding of the importance of intercultural education and more.

With its commitment SAIH is the far most important donor to strengthening and accompanying civil society organisations in RACCS and RACCN, contributing to their legitimacy towards authorities, political parties and citizens, an attribution with the added value that relations goes beyond financing.

Another attribution to progress is related to SAIH's objective: increasing opportunities for youth in RACCS and RACCN. Together university courses, informal trainings, cultural associations, local media, the Wawashang boarding school makes a difference for youth that did not exist decades ago. These activities probably affects young people's employability, at

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[43] Sustained structural changes are also difficult to achieve in developing countries and/or in states under authoritarian rule while there is a weak institutions and when civil and political rights are violated.

least I found individuals that were offered jobs thanks to their participation in activities arranged by CEDEHCA.

7. Sustainability

7.1 To what degree are the results sustainable?

The evaluator would argue that it is obvious that results linked to formal education are sustainable to a very high degree, both related to students and teachers. In this sense, all four partners have contributed directly to sustained results in terms of not only increased knowledge and skills but also contributing significantly to attitudes and hopefully behaviour. Issues related to gender equality, woman's rights and rights for LGTBI persons are striking examples. A focus group with nine URACCAN student's – without their professor – in a CEIMM-organised extracurricular academic course gave good examples of how these students play the role that in human rights theory is called "norm entrepreneurs". That individuals and groups that bring up issues in the society are not accepted and filled with prejudices or even taboos and result in discrimination, stigmatisation and bullying. After sometimes years of campaigning, informal education and other tools these norm entrepreneurs succeeds to change laws, regulations, finally attitudes, and behaviour of the majority.

The mentioned students had on the hand very deep knowledge about gender equality and human rights; on the other, they were involved in innovative activities to change attitudes in their communities, one of them dressed like a transvestite to test reactions from people on the street.

It is also clear that CEIMM has contributed URACCAN's incorporation of gender equality as a mainstreaming issue, both in steering documents, faculty programs and courses.

In addition, the students at the Wawashang boarding school are receiving quite advanced theoretical, practical and formal education in agro-forestry during three years. FADCANIC has good knowledge of the origin of the students, often where they live and work after finishing at Wawashang. However, there is no systematic monitoring of students careers and life projects. A spot check on or selection of students "post-Wawashang life" would provide the organisation and SAIH with important information for positive results and lessons learned.

In many advocacy oriented projects (which almost all civil society organisations have components of or entire projects based on) specific target groups for advocacy efforts are seldom identified. In this case on the sustainability of other improved aspects of SEAR where SAIH has had a role, for example promoting awareness of the importance to offer and implement bilingual education (BIE) in at least primary school, the URACCAN/EDUQUEMOS study of the performance of SEAR in RACCS it is quite clear that achieved advancements easily may be weakened. The same should be said about the entire education system, for example if budgets are cut and politicisation becomes present.

7.2 The issue of state funding of SEAR

7.2.1 Will the Nicaraguan State take over responsibilities for funding of education in the Atlantic region in the near future?

To respond this question it would be good to have data on the development of the education budgets for RACCS and RACCN but this has not been able to get. There is no legal mechanism – no general budget law – in Nicaragua that could provide citizens with such information, not at national or regional level. Partners recognized this as being a serious limitation. Although they have good relations in regional secretariats for education, budget details are not public or discussed. A further complication is that municipalities – desperate to improve education availability and accessibility – often finance parts of the education, both physical spaces (building, maintenance of schools), services such as cleaning and even salaries to teachers. A UNESCO-study from 2010-2011, recognizes that education budgets are complex issues even in more open societies.[44]

The previous mentioned URACCAN/EDUQUEMOS study on SEAR in RACCS also notes, "There was no access to the budget for basic and middle level education and therefore there is no attempt to estimate assignations"[45]

Asked about the Nicaraguan State's responsibilities, almost unanimously replied that there are willingness but real results are impossible to estimate. URACCAN has a recognized status as one of nine universities that receive public financing. It is also a member of the National University Council. There the discussion is alive at least once a year about the fact that four of the major national universities received 60 per cent of the budget while the five others have to share the rest of 40. URACCANs state support has increased marginally during the last years. FADCANIC has been able to negotiate with Ministry of Education to cover previously private funding for 38 or 30 teachers' salaries at the acclaimed PLACE-school in Pearl Lagoon.

7.2.2 How can SAIH support the work for larger State funding? Moreover, what is a realistic time horizon?

What SAIH and partners could start with is searching for a dialogue with both regional and national education authorities with the aim at the first stage getting access to financial and budgetary statistics – not an easy task itself. The support from the regional Secretariat of Education should not be a problem as relations are very good. The Secretariat and partners share the same worries and commitments to SEAR what it means for the autonomy. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance are key institutions but also stakeholders such as UN organisations, particularly UNESCO and UNICEF but also UNDP. Civil society organisations like EDUQUEMOS should be approached, although the political leadership in MINED appears to viewing the organisation as an adversary. As there is collaboration between EDUQUEMOS and URACCAN, SAIH and partners may play a role of reducing

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[44] Nicaragua was one of three countries studied. The report has the title "Building Education Finance Statistics. Lessons learnt from the experiences of three Latin American countries".
http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/lac-finance-data-technical-notes-2012.pdf.
[45] Informe de Progreso Educativo. Educación Intercultural Bilingüe con calidad y Equidad para la Autonomía, p. 31.

political polarisation related to SEAR. When SAIH and partners have a clear picture of financial issues, it is possible to monitor many aspects of SEAR is developing. This approach is about work with a rights based approach, without using what high ranking FSLN officials would label too radical.

A reasonable time horizon for clear progress in this process would be 2-3 years – a conservative but maybe realistic estimation, but just to see that the dialogue has led to specific results in terms of improved access to statistics, monitoring development for education financial resources and analysis of political accountable commitments to increase them.

7.3 To what degree are the organizations sustainable?

URACCAN has between 30 and 36 donors on a yearly basis. FADCANIC has approximately 9-10 donors, while CEDEHCA and CEIMM 3-5 each. I would argue that all four organisations have a habitual identity after many years of being financed by international donors. Their work is shaped by the content in approved projects applications. To change this logic is extremely difficult. Although donors probably has raised the same questions as SAIH now are doing, I have not identified any real plans or activities – one exception is mentioned above - that are aiming to reduce financial flows from international organisations and increase financial autonomy. Without international cooperation, none of the organisations at the level of their size and scope today is sustainable. A total stop of support to projects would reduce the size and actions dramatically. Without support from SAIH would put the partners in a new situation demanding intensive efforts to replace SAIH with other donors.

To increase prospects for increased sustainability with gradually less donor money, SAIH needs to start a completely new form of dialogue, probably also with other donors and the Nicaraguan state. One small step forward would be mapping and systematising the type of services and products the organisations are offering and charging for at the moment, and from there discuss possibilities to increase income. Another issue to rise could be education systems that are spreading in the world – and since years back working in some Nordic countries – where most if not all schools are financed by the state but the schools are operated by private actors (could be companies, cooperatives, associations etc.). What some partners expressed was a fear that if the Nicaraguan government were to operate all schools in RACCS and RACCN, the education quality would decrease significantly. The debate about private schools financed with public resources with allowance to make profit or not for shareholders is very alive in at least Sweden, and linked to social segregation and integration.

8. Overall conclusions

SAIHs long-term cooperation in the education sector in RACCS and RACCN has a number of positive aspects:

- The four selected partners are professional and dedicated to their region's development and correctly view education as a key issue for development and poverty reduction. Partners have strong capacity of managing projects and delivering planned and expected results. All four partners have significant knowledge of and relation to the political context in the region, making them good partners to exercise influence on regional and national authorities, not at least in the executive branch. Quantitative results tend to dominate over qualitative results, although there are numerous of examples when all four partners provide regional authorities with human resources, a qualitative result.

- With financial resources and contacts opportunities – or outputs – of education has increased significantly in RACCS, with URACCAN as a flagship project offering academic education to thousands of young people from all ethnic groups and reaching out to rural communities where third level educations never5 has existed. (URRACAN has two main campuses, four campuses and three extensions.)

- Teachers throughout the region are better equipped in professional terms thanks to primarily FADCANIC's consistent (since mid-90's) training of teachers inside teachers schools, with a wide range of further results: expanding the region's professional teaching, making education more stable in rural communities, improved teaching quality and providing communities with social leadership.

- Together the four partners constitutes what the evaluator consider to be a critical mass for improving education in a region provide of this key service: education is more available, accessible, accepted and to a good degree adapted to the regions needs for the autonomy and identity but also overall social and economic development.

- Tolerance and cooperation between ethnic groups is another important contribution by SAIH through the continuously focus on the promotion of multi-culturalism and bilingual education.

- SAIH has also contributed to expanding partners and beneficiaries' international networks, with a number of contacts with mostly other academic institutions in Norway and Latin America. Those contacts have resulted in exchanges of different education experiences, related to policy and strategies on bilingual and multi-ethnic education, teaching methodologies and improving postgraduate education.

Some of the most important challenges are the following:

- SAIH's development cooperation approach is a combination of what is referred to as a "solidarity approach", meaning a strong trust in partners, including their political affiliations and views, and a "rights based approach", demanding that cooperation should focus on education as a human rights and key for the ability to fulfil other human rights. In a political context as the one Nicaragua (and in other developing countries with weak institutions and authoritarian political leaders keen to hold on to power on) it is important the advocate for education as a human right, reminding

state officials – regardless of political orientation – of their international obligations they have accepted and acknowledged by signing and ratifying international and regional covenants. SAIH is well equipped to promote this type of dialogue without abandoning its solidarity approach. CEDEHCA is a human rights organisation.

- SAIH and partners over the years have not included important aspects in the design and planning of projects, mainly surrounding conditions that may reduce the effectiveness of education and empowerment of youth. One priority in this regards is to analyse development of education budget, tax issues and teachers labour conditions and other conditions that may positively or negatively affect the right to education. Phrases like the state should fulfil the right to education "by all appropriated means", "to the maximum of its available resources" and "the progressive introduction of free education" is guidelines in this analysis.

- SAIH with partners have not made enough efforts to develop program thinking, making it difficult to aggregate different sorts of results at projects levels to program level. How partners contribute to strengthening of SEAR as a whole is here a key issue. The EDUQUEMOS/URACCAN study on the progress of education in RACCS is a good example of how evaluation or progress and challenges can be assessed.

- SAIHs logical framework has recently improved from 2013 with a full result based management model in place, distinguishing outputs from outcomes and outcomes from impact and containing baseline values and means of verification. This is a significant step forward. Earlier years of project, design was weak and partners reporting to SAIH containing much confusion between activities and outputs and weak understanding of impact. This contributed to SAIH's own present acknowledgement to the evaluator that reported results from partners in general are too focused on numbers. The expression "you can't see the wood for all the threes" is relevant here (SEAR is the wood and the threes are the project activities and outputs). Once again, the EDUQUEMOS/URACCAN study provides a good example how SAIH and the four partners should analyse the development of SEAR, with leading researchers already available.

As a general conclusion the evaluator has found that SAIH's cooperation is relevant important, well focused with good potential to be further improved.

9. Thoughts for further programming, including partners

The most important task is to formulate a program together with the four partners, using common objectives or expected results in terms of outputs, outcomes and impact at 1) program level; and 2) at project level for each partner where their respectively results may be aggregated to program level. Broad participation encouraging a discussion and decision on priorities and three levels of objectives with indicators at each level would be keys for success. Partners and SAIH would consider involving other donors with similar profiles and

priorities as SAIH although the team recognize that such donor coordination may be difficult to achieve. Even if a small group of donors participate, it would be a success.

This type of programming also depends on a base line on the status of SEAR. Table 8 is a good example of base line structure but efforts should be done to get more details on education budget issues. Building a base line on SEAR it would be good if UNESCO, UNICEF and Ministry of Education at central level, with the Regional Secretariat in a leading role, could be participative and professional education NGOs such as EDUQUEMOS and maybe others. This process also strives to keep good relations between partners and authorities at central level and in some cases contribute to build bridges between actors that currently are not so strong. SAIH and partners may have to bring third party experts in as facilitators, maybe from Norwegian universities or international education experts from UNESCO or others.

Narrow down the scope of the cooperation should also be considered, discussing for if rural communities will be even stronger prioritized. ToR asks if SAIH are cooperating with relevant actors in the Atlantic region and if there are other organizations that should be explored.

The team did not perform a mapping of organisations working in the education sector. It is a good idea to do this. Actors like EDUQUEMOS have shown capabilities to analyse the development and status of SEAR in RACCS, in a way that goes hand-in-hand with SAIHs and partners' strategic priorities. A similar study is underway in RACCN.

10. Recommendations to SAIH and partners

1. Improvement of the understanding and use of the Result Based Management-model
SAIH should start an internal learning process about Result Based Management (RBM) in general and adapted to the field of education. It is true that planning frameworks has improved lately but there is still a gap between SAIHs understanding of outputs, outcomes and impacts and partners understanding and use of these concepts. Reports from partners as late as 2014 shows that there is room for improvement, using objectives or expected results at all three RBM levels with corresponding indicators, base line values and means of verification. As this process takes time and results cannot be achieved with one or two workshops, an improved and common planning framework could be ready for the next planning period, (2018). How results may be aggregated to different levels, including at the level of impact on the autonomous education system is important. How education outputs and outcomes presumably contribute to key development issues in RACCS and RACCN, such as employability, youth unemployment and reduction of poverty should be considered. Key word here is contribution and providing examples.

2. Analysing the present status of SEAR and the factors behind success and failures
SAIH should require partners to initiate – as an approximately one-year project – an assessment of the status of SEAR that is an overall analysis of education in the same terms as in Table 8. This could be an opportunity to apply the AAAA-framework used by the UN

rapporteur on the right to education and the monitoring body (CESCR, 18 independent experts) of the ICESCR. To implement this exercise partners should to a considerably degree draw from the experiences of URACCAN's/EDUQUEMOS' research reports (the one published on RACCS and the forthcoming on RACCN) and closely collaborate with the same researchers to review statistics and methodologies, using both official and none-official data. This assessment would help partners to raise awareness on how to adapt their activities to specific challenges to education in RACCS and RACCS and also to aggregate results aimed at improve program thinking. Finally, it will be a support to both the government of Nicaragua in its supposed willingness to improve education in RACCS and RACCN and an interesting exercise to share with the current UN Rapporteur on the right to education (Mr Kishore Singh) and useful for different education networks that partners are involved in.

3. Mapping young people's employability and careers.
The idea is not to demand partners to track what happened to every person involved in education, training and advocacy activities, but to randomly identify a limited number of URACCAN/CEIMM and Wawashang students plus participants in CEDEHCA's youth empowering activities and survey the current status in their life project: what are they doing for living some years after: work, studies, unemployment, income, activism, where they live etc. Such information would serve as inputs to improve result reporting and constitute material for "marketing" of the organisations both for internal and external use in relation to the regional and national governments. USAID with FADCANIC has a model that could inspires

4. Improving the use of resources
The recommendation of maximizing the use of resources and knowledge by interconnect the four organizations. Each partner can assist in each of each other's project when needs arise. Guillermo McClean, linguist from Bluefields that has worked with the PEBI since the revolution remarked that during the period of assistance from Finland, the consensus was to collaborate. One example could be CEDEHCA could give courses jointly about leadership with CEIMM such as they have already done with URACCAN at certain moments in the past. It was also commented that because the four projects work individually presently, it would be necessary to have a local coordinator for 6-9 months to assist in meshing and coordinating this idea of close collaboration between the four projects.

5. Monitor and contribute to find other financial resources
To reach a higher degree of financial organisational sustainability – that is continuum to exist with a similar degree of capacity and activism – SAIH should start a new form of accompaniment of the partners, aiming at map possibilities to increase economic resources from the Nicaraguan government and other sources. It is not expected that SAIH would be able to solve the extremely difficult task for partners to reach financial autonomy (without development cooperation resources), but to have a more intense dialog on partners status and efforts on this matter. A first step would be to ask partners to systematize their efforts

searching for financial resources, preferable beyond development cooperation donors. The research on the status of SEAR in terms of government spending would also be an important step to assess how the government are fulfilling its obligation to give priority to fulfil the right to education for indigenous and afro-descendants and mestizos in the Atlantic Region.

6. *Engaging in discussion and analysis of the concept Theory of Change*
Although not discussed much in the report it is important for SAIH together with partners topics related to Theory of Change. What are the most important conditions in the Nicaraguan society that have a positive effect of education? Taxes, budgets, employment opportunities, political and civil freedoms/rights, stronger focus on bilingual education, and so on. Such analytical discussion would improve mutual understanding and maybe a different development cooperation approach. This recommendation is closely linked to recommendations number 2 and 3.

7. *Encourage partners to collect statistics and analysis of trends related to key women's human rights*
SAIH has already a strong focus promotion of indigenous and afro-descendant women's human rights. The evaluation showed some weaknesses of partners' ability to grasp overall trends in RACCS and RACCN. Examples are trends of the prevalence of violence against woman (VAW) and girls in different environments (domestic, schools) and sexual and reproductive rights (for example, see table 10), despite they are actively involved in promoting women's human rights. SAIH should encourage partners to coordinate efforts to collect statistics and analysis of trends on VAW and sexual and reproductive rights and on economic empowerment of women connected to education.

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