

**Water Partners International
Community Water Systems Sustainability Evaluation
Lempira, Honduras
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EVALUATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From July 12 – 22, 2006, The Center for Global Safe Water at Emory University conducted an evaluation of 43 rural water supply projects in Lempira, Honduras. These projects were implemented by WaterPartners International and Comité Central de Proyectos de Agua y Desarrollo Integral de Lempira, or the Central Committee for Water and Comprehensive Development Projects in Lempira (COCEPRADIL), between 1990 and 2002. The goal of this evaluation was to document system status, current operations and financial situation of the water committee, and system maintenance history, as well as to quantify user satisfaction in each of 10 randomly selected projects. Emory attempted to compile areas for operational improvement and identify potential threats to future sustainability.

All of the water systems visited were found to be functioning with active water committees. Nearly all of the communities had conducted some sort of repair of the water system and most reported continued vigilance in tank cleaning and routine maintenance checks. Committee members reported having received technical training at the start of the program and all felt that they were sufficiently prepared to conduct routine maintenance of the system. None of the communities reported a significant number of broken or abandoned water points. Nearly all of the communities surveyed had increased the number of water points from the beginning of the project and all were still collecting the water tariff. Of the repair logs available for viewing, many were kept up-to-date and most committees were able to cover routine expenses and small repairs with money collected from tariffs.

All water systems were four years or older – some were up to ten years old. Overall, 98% (137) of respondents were more than satisfied with the system and 97% (138) were more than satisfied with the functioning of the water committee. Community members use between 5 and 225 gallons of water from their water source per day per household. The most common responses were 75 gallons (40%) and 150 gallons (25%).

Community satisfaction was high throughout the study area for nearly all categories: quality, quantity, accessibility, affordability, and access. This is a good indicator of past project performance, perceived value of the system, and

prospects for future sustainability of the system. There was high satisfaction with the water quantity and quality, management of the water committee, and affordability of the system.

Although the evaluation revealed impressive levels of system sustainability, the evaluation did identify a number of potential challenges to future sustainability of the projects, including disassociation of the local water committees with COCEPRADIL, relaxed system maintenance, financial instability of the water committee, poor water quantity in the dry summer months, and contamination and deforestation at the source.

The threats listed above are mutually reinforcing. The communities that are more highly motivated, have higher satisfaction, and are likely better organized and appear more likely to maintain a relationship with COCEPRADIL, maintain the system, have financial solvency, and are better prepared to deal with external threats to the system. Of the threats to sustainability, the community relationship with COCEPRADIL was of greatest concern but also presented the greatest leverage point for program improvement. Disassociation with COCEPRADIL is likely a result of a number of intangible factors such as poor motivation, bad leadership, and poverty. However, the result is that the community does not receive additional organizational and monetary support in the event of system failure. Bolstering of the capacity of COCEPRADIL to maintain community

relationships may be the greatest opportunity for WaterPartners International to ensure sustainability of the water systems.

However, COCEPRADIL should be commended for the effort in implementing projects that have been sustained for years after project implementation. The success of these projects leads us to the conclusion that the approach used in identifying communities, the process of community engagement and participation, and technology provided are appropriate for the local context.

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For more information on WaterPartners International or the community water systems sustainability evaluation, contact Nicole Wickenhauser, WaterPartners communication manager, at (913) 312-8600 or nwick@water.org.