



Survey of rural policies and programs based on a territorial focus in Nicaragua¹

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Executive Summary

Land use units are defined as physical spaces that are territorially delimited in function of Nicaragua's administrative political organization. This is in turn defined by the country's political constitution and laws referring to such matters. The concept is applied to the national territory as well as the departments, autonomous regions, and municipalities.

Given that land use planning and development has been defined as a 'public action,' government institutions have become involved. The public entities responsible for promoting and regulating such actions are the National Institute of Territorial Research (*Instituto Nacional de Estudios Territoriales, INETER*), as the governing institution, and the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (*Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, MARENA*).

The main public institutions working on projects that explicitly refer to land use development are MAGFOR, MARENA, INETER and, to a lesser degree, INIFOM and INTA. Most of the projects have as key public stakeholders municipalities/governments and regional agencies, as in the case of the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast.

In regard to the land use development approach, while 'territorial development' was added to the law (in addition to planning), no new concepts or approaches have been introduced to the Land Use Planning Policy of Nicaragua, which dates back to 2002.

¹ This working paper has been originally published in Spanish: Ammour, T. 2009. "Catastro de Políticas y Programas con Enfoque Territorial en Nicaragua". Documento de Trabajo N°27. Programa Dinámicas Territoriales Rurales. Rimisp, Santiago, Chile. This document can be accessed through the following link www.rimisp.org/dtr/documentos.

The new bill specifies/ emphasises the following guidelines:

- i) The design and implementation of land use planning and development should start with an effort that utilises harmonised instruments. Thus far, each institution has promoted the development of different types of instruments at the municipal level. For example, INIFOM presented municipal development and multi-year and annual investment plans while INETER introduced land use planning initiatives and MARENA developed municipal environmental programs. The proposed law looks to develop a single instrument with specific contents.
- ii) The process must begin at the national level and move to the municipal level in order to develop corresponding plans;
- iii) The department level should be operationalised (in regard to planning and spaces of coordination and participation) and more weight should be given to the Departmental Association of Municipalities;
- iv) It is necessary to recognise and analyze watersheds as a means of establishing guidelines for rural/urban development and resource conservation;
- v) Municipal officials must link up with other municipalities in order to jointly undertake land use planning when there are shared metropolitan areas, hydrographic watersheds, and protected or strategic zones;
- vi) Regulations regarding the contents of land use planning and development initiatives should include a strategy for natural resource management and development and the development of urban and rural population centres.