

## **UNDP-IDEASS Nicaragua facilitates cooperation with Sri Lanka**



### **March 2009**

Within the framework of IDEASS, the ART GOLD Sri Lanka Programme (UNDP AGSL), with the support of the IDEASS International Secretariat and the UNDP Country Office in Nicaragua, has intervened at a crucial time to obtain sample Leptospirosis Kits from Nicaragua. These sample kits were requested by the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka, to be tested at the Medical Research Institute (MRI) of Sri Lanka, since the incidence of rat fever has been increasing in alarming proportions recently in the country.

The IDEASS Secretariat and the UNDP Country Office in Nicaragua has taken action to provide the Leptospirosis kits that arrived in Sri Lanka on March 2009.

Leptospirosis is an endemic disease in Sri Lanka. The temperate climate, seasonal rainfall, humidity and other ecological factors have contributed to the spread of the disease in the country. Clustering of cases and occurrence of outbreaks in relation to rainfall and paddy field cultivation has been observed in many parts of the country. During the last decade, there has been an increase in the reported number of Leptospirosis cases. A recent outbreak was reported from Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Matara, Anuradhapura, Kegalle, Ratnapura, Hambanthota, and Kandy districts. Public health staff at District and Medical Officer of Health (MOH) level is responsible for carrying out prevention and control activities. Majority of the cases (49%) had been exposed in paddy fields and were in the age group of 20-44 years. The important factor during this outbreak was the reports of rapidly fatal cases among these patients mainly due to respiratory distress. For the effective patient management early detection and timely referral to health facilities equipped with proper management is critical. (source: WHO Sri Lanka)

The CNDR/MINSA ELISA LEPTO KIT is a laboratory technique for the prompt diagnosis of human Leptospirosis using samples of serum, plasma and blood from suspected leptospirosis patients. The KIT gives rapid laboratory results (2½ hours), is cheap and provides high diagnostic resolutions (100% sensitivity and 99.6% specificity). Nicaragua produces a standardized CNDR/MINSA - LEPTO KIT, which guarantees diagnosis of the disease and early warning of possible outbreaks through a network of nationwide laboratories.

The Kits were developed in Nicaragua. PAHO/WHO has provided the Nicaraguan Health Ministry with special support in its efforts to find a solution to the problem of Human Leptospirosis. Since 2001, it has actively supported all the innovation process. In particular, it supported the development of all field and laboratory studies, with scientific advice from international experts, materials, reagents, and professional training in countries such as Brazil, Cuba, the United States and Venezuela.

In 2004, more than 10,000 people were accurately tested in Nicaragua, with laboratory results that were rapidly available. *Since this technique was introduced in Health Ministry services, in 2001, there have been no deaths from this deadly disease in Nicaragua.* Prior to that each year, there used to be more than a hundred deaths and common outbreaks of Leptospirosis in Nicaragua, with mortality rates of up to 1.5 for every 10,000 thousand inhabitants. In 2003, the leptospirosis KIT was given international recognition for its diagnostic qualities by the International Leptospirosis Reference Centre in Holland. In 2004, the innovation won a prize for human development innovation in a competition promoted by the National Council of Science and Technology CONYCIT in collaboration with UNDP. (source: IDEASS website)

The MRI in Sri Lanka will conduct the necessary tests with the sample kits and if requested, the Nicaraguan Health Ministry has indicated its interest to support its counterpart in Sri Lanka to set up and operate the production of the Kits locally in Sri Lanka.

