Gender integration in Zika response at medical and nursing schools in Nicaragua

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The integration of gender in the teaching-learning process of medical and nursing students is an integral step toward ensuring that future providers can offer quality, people-centered health services. The integration of gender in the medical and nursing curriculum can also significantly contribute to greater gender equity in relation to access to health services and to progress towards universal coverage in health.

WI-HER, LLC and ASSIST Nicaragua are supporting the teaching faculty at Nicaraguan universities in integrating gender into their curriculum, so that future providers will not only deliver gender-sensitive quality health services but will also influence communities to advance in human rights and gender equity.

ASSIST Nicaragua, with the support of W-HER, LLC, recently led a training that reached thirty-five faculty members from four universities in Nicaragua and focused on ways to integrate gender elements to improve the university curriculum. After the training, the teaching staff of medical and nursing faculties of the Polytechnic University of Nicaragua (UPOLI) and The Autonomous Christian University of Nicaragua (UCAN) committed to “strengthen the competencies of nursing students in the applicability of gender mainstreaming in health care during the second semester of the academic year”.

By 2020, the elements that will be integrated into the curriculum include, among others: the concepts of sex, gender, equity and equality in health; addressing gender-based violence and its relation to Zika and other sexually transmitted infections; the use of tested methodological tools for the identification of gender
gaps that limit the quality response in health and for the design of programmatic initiatives aimed at addressing these gender issues and improving health outcomes.

The four universities in Nicaragua that have already received the training and two universities of the Caribbean area that will be reached by the end of June, have been provided with a "Pedagogical package for the development of technical skills related to prevention and care in the Zika context". This pedagogical package, developed by WI-HER and ASSIST Nicaragua and validated by the universities, is a tool that integrates everything necessary for teaching at the university: methodological design, technical notes, exercises, power point presentations, and support materials. These materials can be useful improving the health response to other similar viruses as well as reproductive and maternal and child health care (RMNCH).

This training program was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the commitment of the United States to help Nicaragua and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to respond to the challenges posed by the recent Zika virus epidemic, prepare for future outbreaks of Zika and other similar diseases transmitted by vectors and sexually, and to improve the provision of RMNCH.

In the framework of USAID Project Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Health Systems (ASSIST) Project, led by URC with technical assistance for gender integration from WI-HER, LLC, ASSIST Nicaragua also developed other initiatives, such as integration of a gender-sensitive language in materials aimed at helping future providers of health services.