

An excerpt from:

*Better Health & Social Care: How are Co-ops & Mutuals Boosting Innovation & Access Worldwide?*

An International survey of co-ops and mutuals at work in the health and social care sector (CMHSC14)

Volume 2: National Cases

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For the research framework, the analysis of the national cases, and other research components, including a description of the research team members, refer to Volume 1: Report.

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Jean-Pierre Girard

LPS Productions

205 Chemin de la Côte Sainte-Catherine, #902

Montréal, Québec H2V 2A9

Canada

info@productionslps.com

URL <http://www.productionslps.com>



Hondurans receive free medical check-ups at a Sagrada Familia "Health Day." Photo: Cooperativa Sagrada Familia.

## HEALTH SYSTEM

The health system in Honduras is made up of a public and a private sector. The public sector includes the Ministry of Health (MH) and the Honduran Social Security Institute (HSSI). The private sector is dominated by a set of providers offering services paid mostly out-of-pocket. The National Health Plan 2010-2014 includes a set of reforms and anticipates the creation of public health insurance for the poor and the transformation of the HSSI into a public insurance agency, contracting services for its affiliates with public and private providers under a family medicine model.<sup>2</sup>

Cooperatives are involved in assisting their members to access health care. According to the Cooperative Institute of Honduras (IHEDCOOP), there are just over 650 active cooperatives in Honduras. They are categorized by activity: in order of importance, multipurpose, agricultural, agro-forestry, savings and credit, coffee, transport, industrial, housing, fisheries, student, and consumer cooperatives.<sup>3</sup> Health and social care cooperatives are not specifically noted as categories of activity.

Notwithstanding, the savings and credit cooperative sector has taken a lead in providing access to health care. In addition, the medical profession is well-served by savings and credit cooperatives, with a number having launched as closed cooperatives catering only to health professionals. As they grew, many opted to change their statutes to enable all persons to join.

Population (in thousands): 7,936

Population median age (years): 21.57

Population under 15 (%): 35.72

Population over 60 (%): 6.41

Total expenditure on health as a % of Gross Domestic Product: 8.6

General government expenditure on health as a % of total government expenditure: 11.8

Private expenditure on health as a % of total expenditure: 49.7

## HEALTH COOPERATIVES

Two health cooperatives were identified. No further information on their structure or activities was available. *Cooperativa de Servicios de Salud Mutual, Ltda (COSSAMUL)* is a health service cooperative. *Cooperativa Mixta Salbar Limitada* is a community health cooperative established in Esperanza in 2009.<sup>4</sup>

## SAVINGS & CREDIT COOPERATIVES

Savings and credit cooperatives often provide their members specific loan products for medical attention in case of illness or accident. Some are also involved in health promotion, providing members with information on such issues as hypertension, diabetes, and breast and other cancers. Still others run clinics and pharmacies or provide ad hoc health services. Here are some examples:

**Cooperativa Sagrada Familia**, the largest savings and credit cooperative in the country, provides employee with free health care services and life insurance, among other benefits. It offers members a medical assistance plan (*Plan asistencia medica CoopSalud*), which provides access to a network of health providers at discounted prices. For senior members of the cooperative, access is free of charge. (See “Case Study,” below.)

**Cooperativa Ceibeña**, established in 1979, offers its members and their immediate families primary health coverage through *CoopSano*. Under the programme, members benefit from access to free and unlimited general medical consultations and basic medication. In addition, members benefit from discounts on specialized prescriptions. In 2013 it operated three clinics in La Ceiba, San Juan Pueblo, and Jutiapa and was to open a fourth clinic in Tocoa. In branch offices where clinics do not operate, the cooperative organizes health days, providing basic medical consultation services and health promotion on issues such as hypertension and diabetes.<sup>5</sup> Through its foundation it also runs a health programme which benefits both members and the wider community. *Cooperativa Ceibeña* has 13 branch offices around the country.<sup>6</sup>

**Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Fé y Esperanza Limitada** is a savings and credit cooperative founded in 1989. It serves workers, including informal sector and independent workers. It operates a medical clinic offering basic health services including health check-ups for children and pregnant women. It also provides services to control diabetes and hypertension, performs minor surgery, and runs a detox programme for alcoholics.<sup>7</sup> *Cooperativa Fé y Esperanza* has four branch offices.

**Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito ELGA** is the second largest savings and credit cooperative, with 101,687 members in 2013. It runs health days where members have access to free medical exams, including eye and helicobacter pylori (*H. pylori*) exams, and tests for levels of cholesterol, blood sugar, and triglycerides.<sup>8</sup>

**COMIXMUL (Cooperativa Mixta Mujeres Unidas Limitada)** is a women’s cooperative with 25,000 members. Officially categorized as a “mixed” cooperative by IDEHCOOP, COMIXMUL is essentially a financial cooperative, although initially it provided other services. In 2006 it spun off its education and health programme to its then newly-established Foundation for the Development of Women and Family (*Fundación Para el Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer y la Familia, FUDEIMFA*). FUDEIMFA is considered its technical arm. It receives funding from COMIXMUL (5% of its surplus) and NGOs as well as support from the national health system. Through FUDEIMFA, COMIXMUL runs a comprehensive health programme. The programme includes operating a clinic where COMIXMUL members obtain as a membership benefit free health care, including preventive check-ups. The clinic is equipped to provide members with access to general medical consultations, mammography, ultrasound, and cancer screenings. The clinic also carries out medical procedures including biopsies, cauterizations, and minor surgery. COMIXMUL is able to visit its 13 branch offices in order to attend to members. In 2011 a total of 2,556 members received care, including 506 medical procedures and 23 surgeries.<sup>9</sup> The programme also runs a social pharmacy which provides access to affordable medicine through 140 dispensaries reaching about 10,000 families (56,000 people) in 190 communities.<sup>10</sup> FUDEIMFA provides training for community leaders to run the dispensaries and provide advice on the proper use of medication. In 2014, COMIXMUL also introduced a specific loan product for health care-related credit, “CREDI SALUD.”<sup>11</sup>

The sector has also established a wholly-owned insurance company, **Equidad Compania de Seguros S.A.**, to provide insurance services to the members and employees of the savings and credit cooperative sector. The insurance company offers life and non-life insurance products, including health insurance covering illness and accidents. (For more information, see “Insurance Cooperatives,” below).

Finally there are savings and credit cooperatives that were established by health professionals to service their financial needs. Many have opened their membership to the communities in which they operate.

## Case Study<sup>12</sup>

**Cooperativa Sagrada Familia** was founded on February 14, 1969 by three Canadian priests, Muisse Joseph, Norman McPhee, and Bernie McAdam. Today it has 40 branches nationwide and a membership of over 276,000 and 457 employees. Its activities are based on the original mission of its founders: “to provide an option for the poor” with savings and credit products and services that respond to their needs while keeping in mind the well-being of all Honduran families.

This was the umbrella under which Sagrada Familia introduced the Medical Assistance Plan COOPSALUD (Plan asistencia medical) to enhance the quality of life of members and their families through improved family health.

The cooperative entered into a strategic alliance with a well-respected health care provider, recognized for the quality of its services both in Honduras and Latin America.

Through COOPSALUD, members, their spouses, and children under 18 years of age can access quality medical services. Members receive a debit card which, when presented in one of the hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies, entitles the bearer to discounted rates on health care services. Members who are seniors and comply with their membership requirements (maintaining monthly balances on their senior savings account) receive free health care services in 37 localities, with the cooperative covering their health care expenses. Currently 90 seniors benefit from this free service.

The COOPSALUD Plan provides for the following services:

- Ambulance services for medical and paediatric emergencies, illness, or accident
- Medical consultations at any of the clinics in the network
- House calls in case of serious emergencies
- Access to medical advice via a telephone service
- Laboratory network
- Dental care (including emergency dental care)
- Paediatric care
- Preferential rates on pharmaceuticals, diagnostic imaging, etc.

Over 800 members benefited from the COOPSALUD Plan February-March 2014. Sagrada Familia also offers life insurance at no charge to members.

As part of its social responsibility activities, the cooperative also supports community access to health-related services. This includes support to modernize various health centres, hospitals, and morgues, and donations of pharmaceuticals. During health days at its branch offices, tents are set up and free medical care is extended to both members and community residents.



Head Office of the Cooperativa Sagrada Familia in Comayagüela

## PHARMACY COOPERATIVES

Founded in December 2005, the Cooperativa Mixta SOLFAHSA (Solidaridad Farmacéutica Honduras Saludable Ltda) is a purchasing, preparation, and distribution cooperative of independent pharmacists. Members are part of the SOLFARMA network, purchasing their pharmaceuticals for as much as 35% below market prices. With 800 employees, SOLFAHSA provides technical assistance to members, including marketing assistance and human resource development, and represents its members in negotiations with insurance companies. It operates the largest network of pharmacies in the country, with locations in Atlántida, Choluteca, Colón, Comayagua, Copán, Cortés, El Paraíso, Francisco Morazán, Gracias a Dios, Intibucá, Islas de la Bahía, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Olancho, Santa Bárbara, Valle, Yoro.<sup>13</sup>

## INSURANCE COOPERATIVES

**Equidad Compania de Seguros S.A.** is an insurance company owned by the Federation of Credit Unions of Honduras (FACACH) and 41 individual savings and credit cooperatives.<sup>14</sup> It is the only insurance institution supporting the cooperative sector in Honduras, providing a wide range of insurance products, including a health insurance plan named Medicoop. The plan covers 80% of the cost

of ambulatory care and hospitalization for illness and accidents, dental care (for accidents only), laboratory costs, ambulance service, orthopedics, child health, maternity, and psychiatric care in

Honduras and Central America. Equidad Compañía de Seguros insures more than 400,000 people. No specific number of health insurance policyholders is available, however.<sup>15</sup>

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Cooperativa Sagrada Familia for providing information for the case study included below.

<sup>2</sup> Bermúdez-Madriz, Juan Luism, Sáenz, María del Rocío, Muiser, Jorine, and Mónica Acosta. 2011. "Sistema de salud de Honduras." *Salud Pública Méx* 53(2):209-219. Retrieved March 26, 2014 ([http://bvs.insp.mx/rsp/articulos/articulo\\_e4.php?id=002624](http://bvs.insp.mx/rsp/articulos/articulo_e4.php?id=002624)).

<sup>3</sup> Instituto Hondureño de Cooperativas. 2014. Retrieved March 26, 2014 (<http://www.ihdecoop.hn>).

<sup>4</sup> El Decano de la Prensa Nacional. 2009. "Primera Cooperativa Comunitaria: Nace la primera Cooperativa Comunitaria de Salud." *Seminario Fides* Blog. Retrieved April 26, 2014 (<http://semanariofides.com/2009/09/11/primera-cooperativa-comunitaria/>).

<sup>5</sup> Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Ceibeña. 2013. "Cooperativismo básico." Slide presentation. Retrieved April 25, 2014 (<http://www.cooperativaceibena.hn/imagenes/botones/Capacitaciones/COOPERATIVISMO%20%20BASICO%202013%20Mod.pptx>).

<sup>6</sup> Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Ceibeña. 2014. Website. Retrieved April 25, 2014 (<http://www.cooperativaceibena.hn/paginas/sucursales.html>).

<sup>7</sup> Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Fé y Esperanza Limitada. 2014. Website. Retrieved April 2, 2014 (<http://coopfeyesperanza.hn/servicios-medicos/>).

<sup>8</sup> Cooperativa ELGA. 2014. Website. Retrieved April 14, 2014 (<http://www.coopelga.hn>).

<sup>9</sup> Hernandez, Donaldo. 2012. "Programa Acceso a Salud y Medicamentos Esenciales." Fundación Para el Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer y la Familia. Retrieved April 2, 2014 (<http://fudeimfa.org/index-082salud.html>).

<sup>10</sup> FOS-socialistische solidariteit. 2012. *FOS Jaarverslag 2012*. Retrieved April 26, 2014 ([http://www.fos-soccol.be/cntnt/nieuws/jaarverslag/2012\\_fos\\_jaarverslag.pdf](http://www.fos-soccol.be/cntnt/nieuws/jaarverslag/2012_fos_jaarverslag.pdf)).

<sup>11</sup> COMIXMUL. 2014. "COMIXMUL: Formando Mujeres Para el Desarrollo de Honduras." Webpage. Retrieved March 28, 2014 (<http://www.comixmul.hn/index.php/noticias-comixmul>).

<sup>12</sup> Information kindly provided by Cooperativa Sagrada Familia via e-mail communication, April 29, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> SOLFAHSA. 2014. Website. Retrieved April 26, 2014 (<http://solfahsa.com.hn>).

<sup>14</sup> Equidad Compañía de Seguros S.A. 2014. Website. Retrieved March 28, 2014 (<http://www.segurosequidad.hn>).

<sup>15</sup> ICMIF Microinsurance. 2014. "Equidad Compañía de Seguros S.A." Webpage. Retrieved March 28, 2014 (<http://www.microinsurance.coop/icmif-members/equidad-compania-de-seguros-s-a>).