

NICARAGUA

The Nicaragua Project

For All That Is Possible



The Nicaragua Project is a community to community ministry that seeks long-term involvement from individuals to be participants in on-going projects in Nicaragua that foster life, give hope, and help to bring about a world where peace and justice are attained in tangible ways.

Past projects have involved outfitting a dental clinic, eye glasses for underserved communities, on-going scholarship funding for students to go to primary and secondary schools, as well as college, drinking water wells, self sustainability loans for micro-businesses, on-going medical supplies for a rural health care organization, rehabbing a school in the capitol city of Managua, computers for schools, and other self sustainability projects. This year we began working with an orphanage, Casa Cuna Juan Pablo II, in Managua, and it, along with a school, will be the focus of the December 26, 2010 to January 3, 2011 trip.

Before we talk about the possibilities of a work project in Nicaragua, I think it's important for us to have a sense what the country is like, who the people are, and an idea of the pivotal historical events that have brought the country to where it is today.

Located in Central America, Nicaragua is bordered on the north by Honduras, the south by Costa Rica, the west by the North Pacific Ocean, and the east by the Caribbean Sea. It is the largest country in Central America with a total land area of 129,494 sq. km (a little smaller than the state of New York). Most of Nicaragua is rural with an agrarian based economy.

Primary crops are coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, rice, tobacco, soya, beans, beef, veal, pork, poultry and dairy products. Its main industries are food processing, chemicals, machinery, metal products, textiles, clothing, petroleum, beverages, and wood. The government of Nicaragua is a Republic.

When Columbus landed on the Atlantic coast of what is now Nicaragua in 1502, most of the region was inhabited by indigenous peoples. The Spanish founded permanent settlements in 1522, and within 30 years from this date, the aboriginal population fell from an estimated one million to a few tens of thousands. For 300 years thereafter, Nicaragua was ruled from the Spanish empire's regional capital of Guatemala.



Typical rural village home

Independence from Spain was declared in 1821. Throughout its history, Nicaragua has been divided both geographically and culturally between East and West. The Pacific coast, where today about 90% of the population lives, was colonized by the Spanish. In the late 17th century, the Atlantic coast fell under the British sphere of influence and is mostly inhabited by Miskito Amerindians and English-speaking blacks. Most of the Atlantic coast was not incorporated into Nicaragua until the early 1900s, and no road connected the two coasts until the 1980s.



The main highway that connects the east to the west

As the original site of the proposed trans-isthmus canal, Nicaragua was always carefully watched by the world powers. U.S. Marines invaded Nicaragua on numerous occasions in the 19th century and again in the early 20th century. Beginning in 1927, General Augusto César Sandino fought the occupying U.S. Marines until they left in 1933. Sandino was murdered in 1934 by the head of the National Guard, Anastasio Somoza. From then until 1979, Somoza and his family ruled Nicaragua like a fiefdom.

In 1978 and 1979, structural injustice and repression spurred mass insurrections which the National Guard brutally put down, killing 30,000 to 50,000 people. Opposition to the Somoza regime was organized by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, which came to power in July 1979 after a brief war. The Sandinistas nationalized the land and commercial interests of the Somoza family and their close associates (roughly 20% of arable land and industry), and carried out extensive agrarian reform. Sandinista health and literacy campaigns in the early years of the new government won worldwide acclaim. From 1982 to 1989, Nicaragua was again immersed in war when the Reagan administration supported a heavily-armed counter-revolutionary movement. Though unable to win political power, the “contras” terrorized the countryside and inflicted great damage to the economy. A U.S. embargo brought further hardship to the country.



Sunday morning worship service

Most of the fighting ended with the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990, which resulted from war weariness and political ineptness. The country had been ravaged and profoundly polarized by the long years of fighting. Today, Nicaragua is second only to Haiti as the poorest country in the western hemisphere. There is an astonishing unemployment rate of upwards to 76% and over 70% of the country's children who go to school, do not attend school beyond the 6th grade.

Between dictators, wars, revolutions, counter-revolutions, volcanic eruptions, an earthquake that nearly leveled the entire capitol city of Managua in 1972, numerous hurricanes (especially hurricane Mitch in 1998 that took thousands of lives and left the entire infrastructure of the country

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in rubble), it is amazing to me to find the kind of faith and spirit very alive in the people of Nicaragua. I am always humbled by their celebration of life in the midst of despair.

I have been going to Nicaragua since 1989 on various mission trips and work projects. At first it was to “help those people”, but early on, I learned it was me who got the help. I have come to understand the meaning of life in a new light, as I have gotten to know the people of this wonderful country.

After many trips and experiences, I felt like there was still something missing in our relationship with the people we were working with. No one actually said this to me, but what I interpreted from conversations that I was having was, “You people always come down here and do these work projects and bring all these



Children help take care of children in Nicaragua

wonderful gifts, and don’t get us wrong, we love what you have done for us, but nobody ever comes here just to visit or just to be with us”. The next trip we made, my wife Marnie and I spent the Christmas and New Year Holidays with our friends. No agenda, no work projects, and it was the most amazing experience we have ever had!



Centro Alternativo Proyecto 19 de Julio

People have asked me, “Do I have to be a member of a church to go on one of these trips?”, and the answer is no. Although the Nicaragua Project is a faith based organization, no one is ever excluded. We have taken many people who have no relationship to a church or community of faith.

December 26, 2010 to January 3, 2011 Trip

The orphanage that we will be working on is “*Casa Cuna Jaun Paplo II*” . It is located in the capitol city of Managua. I took a 15 member team from Collierville, Tennessee down in July and they did an incredible job, but there is still more work to do. We will mainly be painting and cleaning, but we will also be doing some electrical and repair work. If we can raise enough money, we will also replace the roof. If enough people sign up for the trip, we will also do some painting at “*Centro Alternativo Proyecto 19 de Julio*”, the school that we been working with in Managua. It’s about 5 minutes from the orphanage.

December 2010 Trip Information

We plan to leave **December 26th and return January 3rd**. Some may be staying a few days longer and some may need to return earlier. We stay in the homes of Nicaraguan families, and we eat breakfast and dinner in the homes. We will eat lunch at the orphanage and/or the school. We will probably go out to eat together as a group several times (you can get a good meal for around \$4.00 to \$7.00). We give the families where we stay \$20.00 per day for each day we are in their homes. This helps with the food they provide. Everyone contributes \$5.00 a day towards lunch food and \$50.00 towards the bus that takes us back and forth each day. We will also do a day trip to a volcano or some other interesting place, and that will cost approximately \$20.00.

Below is a good estimate on what the trip will cost:

Airfare	Depending on departure, somewhere between \$650 and \$ 1,000.00
Food and Lodging in homes @ 20.00 per day X 9 days	180.00
Day Trip	20.00
Misc. Expenses, souvenirs, etc.	75.00
Bus	50.00
Lunch \$5.00 per day X 8 days (or X days you will be there)	40.00

So roughly somewhere between \$900.00 and \$1,365.00 would be your total cost for the trip.

If you have any question about this trip, please contact:

Gene Cotton
(615) 804-0153 or (615) 794-5712
gene5712@aol.com

Please feel free to contact me at anytime. Also, be aware that the longer you wait to purchase your ticket, the more expensive it becomes.

This is an exciting life-changing possibility for your life. There have been few people who have made this trip whose lives have not been profoundly changed. I have been going to Nicaragua since 1989, and I know the difference this is going to make in the lives of the children at the orphanage and school, as well as the difference that it is going to make in the lives of you who make the trip .

What Else You Can Do

Whether you can go or not, there are other things that you can do. You can make a donation. All gifts are tax deductible. Checks should be made out to **"The Nicaragua Project"** and sent to:

Gene Cotton • The Nicaragua Project • 3411 Sweeney Hollow Road • Franklin, TN 37064

Every single dollar that is donated, goes towards the project. There are no administration fees or other costs associated with our work in Nicaragua. 100% of the money goes to Nicaragua, and I must tell you we work very hard to turn a nickel into a dollar.

There are other needs as well. We need computers for the school (ones that run at least Windows XP), flat screen monitors, computer networking gear, school supplies, children's clothing, especially white blouses, white shirts, blue skirts and blue pants (this is the school uniform), office supplies, musical instruments, any kind of childrens books in Spanish, and any kind of kitchen utensils, plastic or metal.

And most importantly, you can pray. Pray for the people of Nicaragua, pray for our team members who will go this year, and pray that as we share God's love through this ministry, people will be drawn to Him.

Before



After



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● Of those elementary school students that do attend school, 70% do not go beyond 6th grade.



● 15,000 children between the ages 7 and 14 live on the streets in Managua.

Education

- 34% of Nicaraguans are illiterate, in rural areas this is 46%.
- The national average for years of schooling is only 3.5 years.
- Over half of school-age children do not (cannot) attend class.



Centro Alternativo Proyecto 19 de Julio

- Six of every 10 urban children go to school, one of every 10 rural children go to school.



- The Nicaragua Project has an opportunity to make an incredible difference in this school.



Young girl works cleaning windshields

Making The Commitment

What our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua don't need, is someone who is going to flash in and out of their lives for 15 minutes so they can feel good about "*having done something*". What they do need is people who are going to enter into long term partnerships that are going to make a real difference not only in their lives, but in life of their country. This is why the Nicaragua Project has been creating possibilities since 1989. We are in it for the "long haul".



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- 1. Typical village home on east coast
- 2. Old church in Managua
- 3. East coast Miskito Indian woman
- 4. Leonardo Montenegro, one of the students we have put through college
- 5. Beds at the orphanage
- 6. Children at orphanage before new floor
- 7. Typical rural kitchen
- 8. Girls carrying water from river to home

8.

