

DOS PUEBLOS

New York–Tipitapa
Sister City Project

An International Partnership for Respect, Sustainability, and Human Rights

www.tipitapa.org

155 West 72nd Street, Suite 402, New York, New York 10023

917-776-4246

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Make a bigger difference by helping us promote human rights through programs that help overcome poverty. If you know of an individual, business, or foundation that might support our work, please contact us!

The Strength of Women

By Lupe Ramsey

This June, board members and volunteers visited our sister city. This delegation took place during a difficult time - as Nicaraguans recognize that wealthy countries can't provide the same levels of support due to the global economic crisis. The US nor the EU will fulfill their levels of aid to Nicaragua in 2009, and the Millennium Challenge Account created by G.W. Bush cancelled its remaining \$60M amid allegations of fraud in local elections last fall. Money sent back to families by Nicaraguans who have emigrated north has also fallen dramatically.

We were impressed that upon arriving at the airport in Managua, all passengers were screened for swine flu with a thermal camera before being allowed in the country. Nicaragua also launched a major public health campaign to prevent the H1N1 virus from affecting its population, dispatching thousands of health *brigadistas* to educate people and detect any new cases. This theme of good organizing in the face of financial scarcity was repeated throughout our trip. With the help of community organizers, we saw these realities in Ciudadela San Martín when delivering much-needed school supplies. Next we visited the community water well to see their plan for new pipes to bring potable water for 120 additional families. We also looked at a location for a feeding center, as layoffs at the free trade zones continue to idle employees as jobs leave for China. (Cont. Pg. 2)



Little New Yorkers Make a Big Difference in Nicaragua

By Helen Waghorn

In Tipitapa, where clean drinking water and electricity are in short supply, one might think that books and learning materials are secondary, but when you see the impact of Rosa's children's lending library you realize this is not the case. The library is the only place where children can borrow a book, and for some it is the only opportunity to read at all. More than one parent told us that children who take out books each week and participate in group activities such as reading classes, repairing books and teaching others to read, are going to be the future leaders of the country – we know they're right! What makes the library so important is that it is not just a place for education, it is also a safe haven where children can spend time with friends, learn about hygiene for better health, and a place where they can get moral support that they may not get at home.

Our delegation brought five 50 lbs bags of school supplies and Spanish children's books, kindly donated by PS87, a public grade school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for the children of Ciudadela San Martín. Given the success and demand for Rosa's existing library, Rosa has started a small library here that serves (Cont. Pg. 2)

The Strength of Women (cont.)

Mayor Cesar Vazquez and Vice mayor Ligia U. Santana informed us that Tipitapa continues to grow. Ligia took us to a new settlement Cristo Rey, where cardboard, plastic and aluminum sheets serve as new homes for the latest residents. We were glad to hear that all property titles in this community were only being given to women, but the good news ended here as Ligia informed us that with the swell of thousands of residents in less than a year, and no electricity, water, or social services, the risk of disease and crime is high. I asked if she thought that only a woman could pull this community together. She asserted, “women do this kind of hard work everyday around the world, and get nothing for it. Here we are giving them property for the hard work that is involved in keeping families together, especially in these impossible circumstances.”



The women of Nicaragua have become the beacon for change, and we were glad to hear this from the halls of the mayor's office to the communities women serve. The fight for most women is twice as tough – not only do they need to earn a living but they must

also provide family care, and run a household. They are survivors of war, economic and sexual exploitation – yet they refuse to give in to despair. Instead, they teach us how to organize, to build health clinics, nutrition programs, schools and literacy campaigns. Women such as Rosa, a community organizer who helps over 200 children, and Lucia, a mother of 6, who built her own home and installed pipes to bring water to her family illustrate the power of women.

We left Nicaragua filled with hope but sobered by the increasing poverty we saw. We returned home ever committed to the struggle for health, nutrition, equality, and an end to economic injustice. Please join us in supporting these women and their strength in making this world a better place.

Little New Yorkers Make a Big Difference in Nicaragua (cont.)



handicapped children and the children who labor at the local dump.

The big day for the delivery arrived and we were told, “some children will be waiting for you”. As we approached the red gates of the school, a group of policemen stood in the street. Were they waiting for us? Our thoughts were soon confirmed as we turned into the school to see around 200 cheering children sitting in the sun with their teachers and parents. We were suddenly confronted with five times the children than we were expecting. Everyone was excited about the gifts from the students at PS87, but the idea of handing out the materials was now impossible – Rosa's meticulous inventory of all supplies down to the last pencil for 30 children had to be rethought. She was also surprised, and remarked that as funds and resources have become scarcer, word travels fast around the communities, and parents (mostly mothers) do their best to provide educational goods for their children.

We thank our little New Yorkers at PS87 for contributing to Rosa's dream of making education a reality for so many children, especially for handicapped children who are often forgotten, and are a source of shame for families in places like Nicaragua. Through school supplies and books, Rosa is able to show parents their children's talent!

Please continue to support our success with women and their families. Send your tax-deductible contribution today!