



PRONiCA

News from Nicaragua

December 2008
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Annual Report 2008

Lillian Hall, Program Coordinator

This year, El Centro de los Amigos, ProNica's Nicaragua office, pushed limits, explored new areas, bid farewells, prepared our hearts for the next encounter, and spoke the truth. We loved the world, our people of all sizes and colors, our land of lakes and volcanoes, and of places like the La Chureca dump. We cried from joy and laughed at shared sorrows. We imagined a better world. I believe in order for things to become reality, we must imagine them first.

Although ProNica's presence in Nicaragua is just two full-timers and a few part-timers, we have, with great grace, assumed greater responsibilities. We hosted an unprecedented five delegations and seven summer volunteers. I monitored eleven projects in five provinces, some of them over long, rough dirt roads. Quaker House was improved and generated some funds for our work at large. Ongoing relationships were nurtured and new relationships begun.

Indeed, 2008 was an exciting and challenging year.

Delegations

One of the main areas of growth is delegations. A major part of ProNica's mission is educating

US citizens about Nicaraguan reality. Delegations experience Nicaragua personally and learn about ProNica-supported projects in particular. Delegation revenue helps sustain the organization. The former is important in that to help Nicaragua we need to change international policies which affect it. The latter is important in that it makes ProNica less vulnerable to the inevitable fluctuations of donations and more financially self-sufficient. Our delegation work is an overwhelming success.



La Chureca mom bathing her baby
guerda kochanska/luca tronci photographers

In the recent past, it was often a challenge to host even a small group of four or five people. In the last year we hosted four major student delegations plus one smaller Friends Witness group. Eckerd College, Washburn University, University of Florida, Haverford College, and Wilmington College sent up to fifteen participants. Three delegations came during the summer; two overlapped. With delegation assistant Carmen Gonzalez, a Spanish interpreter and long-term Nicaraguan resident, ProNica can

now host more, even simultaneous or overlapping, delegations.

Delegation groups receive presentations from Nicaraguan

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ProNica's mission is to assist in creating and sustaining programs by and for the Nicaraguan people. These projects should hold promise for grassroots growth, arise from Nicaraguan needs and tradition, and provide not only survival but also empowerment.

ProNica's priorities are on community cohesiveness and economic development, training in non-violent procedures, health, education, agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. Education of those who seek information or to be of service is part of our mission.

ProNica, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation under the spiritual care of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida and Managua, Nicaragua. ProNica is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nicaragua. The work is accomplished by an international core of dedicated volunteers and staff who seek to embody Quaker principles of consensual decision making and action and respect for that of God in every person. This service project arose out of a deep concern over the international exploitation of the Nicaraguan people and resources and a wish to respond to that concern in practical and constructive ways.

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2008 Stateside Report

Dauida Johns, Stateside Coordinator

ProNica presentations were given at Friends General Conference gathering in June and four other events in Florida and Pennsylvania. Nine Yearly Meeting Gatherings displayed ProNica information. Three interviews were on local radio. Clerk Pam Haigh was honored by the Women's Peacepower Foundation.

Quarterly newsletters reach over one thousand readers. PDF newsletters posted on the website (www.pronica.org) reach countless more. For an email announcement of the updated website, contact the stateside office. For a DVD showing two segments of ProNica projects, send \$10 to stateside office.

Three quarterly meetings are held in St Petersburg, Florida on the Saturday before Easter week, in September and December. All are welcome. Contact the stateside office to stay informed by emailed agendas and reports and for ways to contribute your talents. Vice-President of the Board Al Webber stepped down due to health; another Board member is sought at press time.

ProNica project partners in Nicaragua submit proposals in October. The consejo, the Nicaraguan advisory committee, reviews the proposals and makes recommendations. Translated proposals and consejo recommendations are sent to the stateside projects subcommittee for review and recommendation. The full committee reviews and approves project grant awards in the December meeting. Project funds are distributed in January. The March newsletter will list 2009 awards.

Donations are welcome in any way you choose: check, money order, credit card online through PayPal. Include ProNica in your monthly budget. Name ProNica a beneficiary in your estate planning. Donate stocks.

ProNica thanks you for your generous support in these uncertain economic times. □

this holiday season, give a

Gift of Life

ProNica sends a hand-calligraphied certificate acknowledging your financial donation in celebration or memory of a person or event

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professionals on issues such as, union organizing in the sweat shops, consumer rights the plight of street-children, issues facing women. They visit ProNica project sites and perform some service project such as digging water system trenches and planting trees. Each itinerary is created according to specific interests. Articles in prior newsletters tell these inspiring stories.

Another major focus of ProNica delegations is cultural exchange. Three Nicaraguan students and a teacher are invited to accompany each delegation from beginning to end. For some Nicaraguans, it might be the first time they've traveled within their own country. Delegates are immersed in Nicaraguan culture through living with host families in the community where they work on service projects. This provides 24/7 exposure for both cultures.

Volunteers

This year ProNica tested a new delegation/volunteering model. Former ProNica volunteer and Haverford College student Katrina Schwartz, who had volunteered with Los Quinchos, wanted others to share her transformational experience. She organized a delegation from Haverford and

Bryn Mawr. They spent their first week in Spanish school, two weeks in delegation as described above, and the remaining eight weeks in volunteer service. These delegate/volunteers received grants from Haverford's Center for Peace and Global Citizenship and from San Francisco Friends Meeting Pickett Grant Foundation.

Volunteers served at the Esteli Library, the Gallery of Heroes and Martyrs, Mama Licha's Clinic, the Acahualinca Women's Center, and Los Quinchos. Another Haverford College student, Gloria Vidal, volunteered with the Yahoskas girls in San Marcos.

Quaker House

Quaker House has become financially self-sustaining thanks to the many travelers – delegations, individuals, sister city groups – who lodge there. This year we made improvements which make it a more pleasant, inviting space. A stainless steel sink and tile kitchen counter, a new computer, and another exit onto the rear patio. Extra Quaker House income goes into the general ProNica funds in Nicaragua. Quaker House caretakers come and go: Brynne Keith-Jennings departed in May, Irene King comes on board in December.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Acahualinca Women's

Center continues to provide vital health, legal, psychological and training services to the women of this poor urban neighborhood in Managua. In addition, it also participates in larger alliances such as the Women's Network Against Domestic Violence, the Sexual and Reproductive Health Network, the Central American Congress on AIDS.

In 2008 ProNica gave the Center \$3453 for their on-going campaign to educate women about cervical and uterine cancer and the importance of pap smears. These funds have enabled 1,000 women to get free pap smears, a critical tool for the early detection of cervical and uterine cancer. Likewise, funds from the Ruth Hyde Paine Fund for Women's Health were provided as needed throughout the year for tubal ligations. Seventy-two women and three men have benefited from sterilizations (tubal ligations and vasectomies) at a cost of over \$5000.

The highly successful beautician training classes continue to provide job training for poor women, including former sex workers, to find dignified work. Twenty young women are currently enrolled in these classes which are given three times a week at the Center. La Chureca classes were

cancelled due to low enrollment

The Center also runs the Acahualinca library and community preschool. ProNica awarded the library

\$1450 for books and cleaning supplies. The library has a great need for more books.



Silvia Cisneros, Acahualinca

An on-going problem which threatens the stability of the Center is the lack of salaries. Over the years, these staff members have endured as long as six months without salaries and depended on other family members' income to sustain the household. So great is their commitment to their Center,

however, these women continue to work as hard as ever, more than forty hours per week. Lack of salaries also means lack of health insurance and ability to pay into the national pension program for their own retirement. This creates much stress for the women as they get older and experience more health problems. In 2007, the Levinson Foundation awarded the Center \$18,000 which paid salaries for one year and

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also purchased materials for the Center. This year, however, the old reality resumed.

The Casa Materna in Matagalpa plays a vital role for the impoverished women of their area. High-risk pregnant women travel from remote villages into the city to stay near the hospital in order to give a safe birth. Frequently, the Casa is at full capacity and Casa staff estimate that 1/3 of these women would have died if they had given birth in their isolated, mountain communities where medical services are unavailable.

Most of the women who come to the Casa already have large families. Because they have a high-risk pregnancy, it is essential to offer these women family planning options, including sterilization. Sterilization is an especially pragmatic alternative since contraceptives are cost-prohibitive or difficult to obtain in many of their communities. Therefore, tubal ligations provide security against future pregnancies so that meager family resources support their existing children.

ProNica provided the Casa with \$5572 dollars for tubal ligations and general operating funds. One hundred and forty-one women from the communities of San Pedro del Norte, Bocana de Paiwas, Waslala, Rancho Grande, among other communities, have benefited by the tubal ligations and medications. Funds also covered vital services such as electricity and water.

Mama Licha's Clinic in Esteli received \$2514 from ProNica for pap smears, exudations (smears to determine sexually transmitted diseases), medicines, and office supplies. Mama Licha has performed 400 pap smears and exudations on poor women coming from the countryside and the tobacco barns on the outskirts of Esteli.

Casa de los Niños in San Ramon has, for years, conducted health campaigns to educate poor farmers and coffee plantation workers about health and nutrition issues. The Casa was awarded \$1567 from ProNica to strengthen the network of community health promoters. These promoters were trained to educate the general population about their health-care rights. The

promoters travel to distant coffee plantations and rural communities and give workshops on a variety of health topics.

The Esteli Library continued to buy office and educational materials, including arts and crafts supplies for their children's section with funds from a prior-year award. AVP workshops were held in late spring.

The Martin Luther King School is part of the Martin Luther King neighborhood association in a working class neighborhood in Managua. Due to the high crime rate there, the school requested funds for security to protect the school's meager belongings. When their newest computers were stolen, the principal reluctantly reached the sad conclusion that expensive equipment attracts thieves. Instead of requesting money for books or computers, the principal requested \$1136 for razor wire which ProNica awarded.

The Los Quinchos Association in Managua and San Marcos continues to be one of the largest recipients of ProNica support. With \$31,000 from larger organizations and individual supporters, ProNica provides meals at the La Chureca dump; salaries for a social worker, a psychologist, and a librarian; books and materials for their library; and an art therapy project.



La Chureca student walks home
guerda kochanska/luca tronci photographers

Thanks to a generous donation from Jeanne Nash of Fort Collins Monthly Meeting, ProNica provided over \$7000 towards the San Marcos community library. In a colorful building on the main street, the library serves both the children of Los Quinchos and the community. Books, shelves, tables and chairs, and maps substantially improved the facility.

Cele Meyer, a major donor through the Central American Fund for Human Development, continues to provide one hearty meal a day, six days a week, for forty children who live at the La Chureca garbage dump. La Chureca, the largest open air garbage dump in the Americas, is home to over 120 families who eke out a living collecting bottles, cans, and plastic to sell to recyclers. For these children, this is the only real meal of the day, and, just as important, provides a brief escape from working in the mountains of trash.

CreArte, a new ProNica partner, with \$12,000 from the Mason Hirst Foundation, provides art therapy classes in San Marcos. After the 2006 suicide of one of the older Quinchos, these classes provided a year's worth of much-needed activities by psychologist Otto Castillo. Much was learned this first year to carry forward in this and other collaborations such as with the children of the Filter House and the Acahualinca Women's Center in Managua.

For the **Tienda Campesina** in Achuapa, ProNica continued serving as a liaison for the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC). 2008 was the third and final year of CFSC funding with \$12,220 for the Hibiscus flower project. This medicinal plant makes a refreshing tea as well. Though the funding has ended, the production continues and the co-op is packing it into individual tea bags in addition to the loose dried buds.

After this very positive relationship and project results, CFSC made more funds available for another project. Centro para el Alojamiento y Formacion Integral (CAFI) is a dormitory for high school students of Tienda co-op members who live in outlying areas. Prior to the construction of the CAFI, many rural youth ended their studies after sixth grade due to the distance to the high school in Achuapa. Twenty-three teenagers now live at the

CAFI and attend high school. They dream of finishing high school and advancing to university. While food and lodging at the center is free, parents contribute whatever food they produce on their family farms. However, agriculture is risky business; weather may cause crop failures or poor harvests. CFSC contributed \$2455 dollars toward the costs of the center.

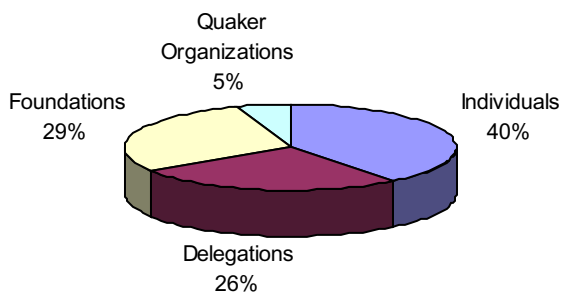
ProNica supported the Achuapa International Music and Solidarity Festival held each August. This festival brings national and international recognition and resulting pride to these talented, rural Nicaraguans. \$1000 was awarded for stage and sound, strings for musical instruments and material for dresses for folkloric dancers. As in previous years, the festival was a great success with over forty groups participating in the two-day event.

Achuapa Municipal Library was awarded \$1174 for books and materials. In January, librarian Raphaela Valverde and I traveled to the two major bookstores in Managua to purchase these items. Children and older students visit this small, local library for homework and general reading.

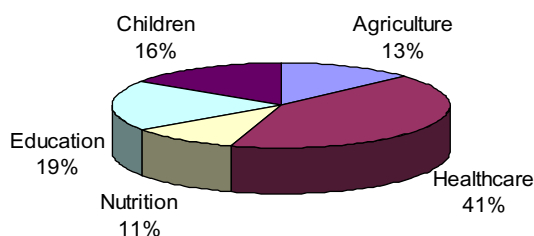
Alternatives to Violence Workshops were held in Matagalpa, Acahualinca and the Esteli Library with funding from the Ken Kinzel Memorial Fund. □

2008 Financial Report

Donations 2008



Projects 2008



Fiscal Year (Jun 07 - May 08)

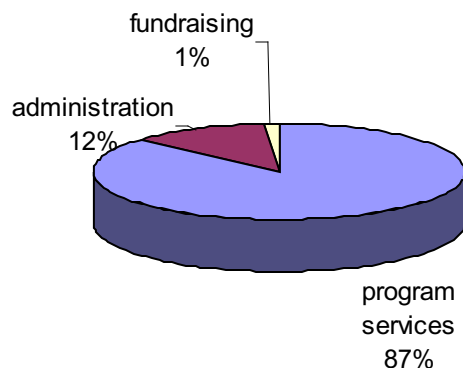
210,072 Income

209,801 Expenses

ProNica financial data is analyzed quarterly by the finance committee.

Over 400 supporters sent donations during the fiscal year ending 31 May 2008.

Expenses 2008



Run by Women, for Women, Employing Women

Kara Hartzler, volunteer

Life for the average Nicaraguan woman is far from easy. Many women marry young and become pregnant in their mid to late teens. Some women, over their lifetime, have over a dozen or more children – only a few of whom survive. Unemployment and subsequent poverty are ever-present forces that lead many young women to turn to prostitution or dangerous jobs in the city’s landfill. Cultural beliefs about a woman’s place can lead to domestic violence and a debilitating lack of confidence in her own self-worth.

In the midst of these challenges, three grassroots organizations are reaching out to address the urgent needs of women in Nicaragua. These three organizations – run by women, for women, and employing women – not only strive to meet the crucial needs facing women in Nicaragua. They also stand as an example of local women who are able to rise above their circumstances and serve their communities as both a resource and an inspiration.

Casa Materna

Nicaragua’s stunning mountains, valleys, and lakes represent a beautiful natural resource – but one that can make travel and access to health care difficult for those who live in remote areas. As a result, a dedicated group of midwives have traditionally taken responsibility for delivering and caring for mothers and newborns in rural areas. But in certain high-risk cases, these midwives may lack the resources to deal with medical emergencies, often leading to the unnecessary death of the mother and child.



Casa Materna mothers-in-waiting

Casa Materna addresses this need by working with local midwives to identify high-risk pregnancies prior to labor. These are women who have previously had a caesarean

section, who are carrying twins or a breach baby, who face complications, or who fall outside the traditional birthing age range. All are invited to Casa Materna for a check-up and the opportunity to spend their final week of pregnancy in a cheerful, comforting house with ready transportation to the hospital. It is estimated that, of the 800 women that Casa Materna assists every year, nearly one third would develop fatal medical complications without this ready access to doctors and hospitals.

Clinica Mama Licha

After retiring from the state health system with thirty-four years of experience as a nurse and midwife, Alicia Fuente, also known as Mama Licha, didn’t want to stop working. And after observing the needs of the women all around her, she realized she didn’t have to. In 2001, Mama Licha opened her house – more specifically an area separated by a curtain from the rest of her kitchen – to begin providing a steady stream of health services offered to low- or no-income women.



Mama Licha

Since then, Mama Licha has moved from her kitchen into a small clinic attached to her house. There, the poorest women in Estelí, regardless of their ability to pay, receive prenatal care, vaccinations, contraception, and birthing and parenting classes. Nursing students from Yale University, as well as other midwives, regularly visit to tap into her years of experience, knowing that it will always be accompanied by a word of encouragement, a cup of tea, and a warm hug. Unfortunately, as with all three projects, lack of funds to provide these needed services is a constant worry, and Mama Licha herself earns less than \$40 a month.

Acahualinca Women’s Center

In one of Managua’s poorest neighborhoods, the majority of residents earn a living by working at “La Chureca” – the local dump. Scrounging through the castoffs for metal or other recyclables has become the local industry, subjecting women and children to a dangerous unhealthy environment.

In the midst of this storm, the Acahualinca Women's Center represents a place that many women can turn to for a variety of needs. For those who wish to escape the cycle of high birth rates and subsequent poverty, tubal ligations and general contraceptive assistance is available. For victims of domestic violence, the Center has established a legal clinic to assist women in knowing their rights and options under the law. For women who would otherwise have little choice but to turn to prostitution to support themselves and their families, the Center offers beautician classes and a chance to build job skills. In its holistic approach to the realities of the neighborhood, the Acahualinca Women's Center provides hope to women faced with the daily challenges of living in and around "La Chureca."

What these three organizations have in common is not only their willingness to provide critical services to women who would otherwise go without. Rather, Casa Materna, the Acahualinca Women's Center, and Clinica Mama Licha also exist for a higher, symbolic purpose: to show that women's health matters, that in a society where women and their contributions are often dismissed or ridiculed, it is worth the time, effort, and money to invest in the health and well-being of our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. And that hopefully, the struggling woman receiving services today will gain the courage and resources to see herself as the next Mama Licha, the next woman to reach out to her community and provide a word of encouragement, a cup of tea, or a warm hug for those yet to come. □

Friends Peace Teams and Alternatives to Violence in Peacebuilding en las Américas

Val Liveoak

Alternatives to Violence Project arises from the belief that everyone possesses a power for peace to transform relationships. AVP finds ways of resolving conflict without violence and empowers people to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect, community building, cooperation, and trust.

Last May, I co-facilitated a workshop in Acahualinca Women's Center. The conditions in this poor working-class neighborhood are harsh. Violence and threats of violence control many women. Some violence is gang related; some is the result of drug or alcohol abuse; some reflects the deep wounds of the misogyny. The resulting physical, mental and sexual abuse of women and children is seldom reported or punished. The thirteen workshop participants were eager to use their new AVP skills.

I learned that six women were killed this year in Matagalpa; over twenty more country-wide. The men remain untried, received light sentences, or remained free after conviction and sentencing. A Matagalpa women's group protested the impunity received by men who killed their women partners.

There is no functioning AVP program in Nicaragua. Only when Kit and Ev Pilgrim traveled to Nicaragua have workshops happened. The biggest limitation is personnel – AVP volunteers have work and family obligations. The next limitation is funding – for transportation, food, and lodging. Two other AVP facilitators and the Acahualinca staff wish to reinvigorate the program.

All this led me to conclude that Friends Peace Teams' Peacebuilding en las Américas (FPT-PLA) should coordinate the development of an AVP organization in Nicaragua.



AVP workshop exercise

Since 2002 PLA has worked in partnership to develop AVP in Colombia. Currently 20-30 workshops are conducted annually with local financing. In 2007, PLA began work in Guatemala and El Salvador. In 2008 in Colombia, PLA adapted community-based trauma healing and reconciliation work that FPT African Great Lakes Initiative pioneered in Burundi and Rwanda. We plan to add this program to other AVP work in Latin America in the near future.

To support this work send your donation to either, Friends Peace Teams, 1001 Park Ave, St Louis MO 63104, earmarked "PLA-Nicaragua AVP," or to ProNica, earmarked "AVP."

For more information on AVP, see www.friendspeaceteams.org or www.pronica.org. □

CASA
CUA'QUERA



Panchita Fletes
in Managua, Nicaragua

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Quaker House has a fully equipped kitchen, and is convenient to shopping, internet cafes, banks and restaurants.

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- * Gift of Life - in memory of a person or event, ProNica sends a hand-calligraphied certificate acknowledging your financial donation.
- * Name ProNica as a beneficiary in your estate planning. Contact us for details.
- * Friends Fiduciary Corporation has plans for now and later giving. Contact us for details.
- * Monthly gifts provide enduring/sustaining support for ProNica's Project Partners.
- * ProNica coordinates volunteers, work study delegations, Friends Witness Tours for groups of 4 to 6.

Elder Friends Witness Tour

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5 days in February 2009

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Experience it yourself



Your financial support assists projects that feed children living in La Chureca, the Managua City dump. Thank you.