



# PRONiCA

## News from Nicaragua

December 2011  
Vol 24 No 4

Published quarterly by the ProNica Committee of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting since 1987  
*Quakers in Solidarity with Nicaraguans for 25 Years*

### Nicaragua Annual Report 2011

Lillian Hall, ProNica Program Coordinator

ProNica's work followed its steady rhythm this year with great success and a few challenges.

#### PROJECT PARTNERS:

##### *Acahualinca Women's Center, Managua*

ProNica supports three programs administered by the Acahualinca Women's Center: their clinic, library, and beautician training classes. Each year the clinic requests funds to continue their work on cervical and uterine cancer, a campaign of many years. Last year they requested US\$4,879 to provide 500 pap smears to low-income women, to perform 30 biopsies, to print educational fliers, and for supplies. The consejo in Nicaragua and the stateside committee enthusiastically approved their request, given the importance of providing these life-saving services to women who otherwise lack it. As of September, they performed all procedures. The need for these and for tubal ligations and vasectomies has grown. Women, and their partners, who were affected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or other infections also received medications and condoms to prevent re-infection.

The Acahualinca Library received funds for books, cleaning supplies and paint, of which US\$700 was granted

for books and supplies. We were confident that a visiting student delegation would paint the library as a service

project. Indeed, Washburn University students bought the paint and painted the library in January 2011. It was perfect timing for the library as well because the Nicaraguan students were on vacation. When the Nicaraguan school year started in late January, the students returned to a freshly painted library.

The Acahualinca Women's Center requested US\$4,845 for 2011 beauty classes' teacher's salary and consumable products. Twenty-five un- or under-employed women finish their ten-month course this December. As part of their social service requirement, they visited an evangelical church to talk about personal hygiene, de-louse children, cut hair and give manicures and pedicures.

##### *Los Quinchos Association*

As of October, ProNica has sent over US\$20,400 for food in La Chureca, the Yahoskas girls home, the Quinchos boys facilities, and for the librarian. Due to the reduction in extracurricular activities for the children, the library plays a more important role than ever. In solidarity, ProNica has partnered with Los Quinchos since 1992, attending celebrations and grieving their losses. Hundreds of children have passed through their programs.

*see Report on page 2*



A young Quinchos washing his plate at the boys farm in San Marcos. ProNica supports the Quinchos library down the road from the farm where the Quinchos keep up with their studies.

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### ProNica Board

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**ProNica's Mission** is building sustainable cross-cultural relationships between the peoples of Nicaragua and North America using Quaker values.

**ProNica's Vision** is solidarity that empowers and educates Nicaraguans and North Americans.

ProNica assists in creating and sustaining programs by and for the Nicaraguan people. These projects hold promise for grassroots growth, arise from Nicaraguan needs and tradition, and provide not only survival but also empowerment.

ProNica's priorities are community cohesiveness and economic development, non-violence training, health, education, sustainable agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. We educate those who seek information or wish to serve.

Our 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 everyone. This service project arose from a deep concern over the international exploitation of the Nicaraguan people and resources and a wish to respond in practical and constructive ways.

ProNica, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation under the spiritual care of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida and Managua, Nicaragua. ProNica is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nicaragua.

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Report from page 1

### *Achuapa Library*

This year the Achuapa Library was awarded US\$2,000 to participate in the Books for Life matching grant program. When a library receives US\$2,000 toward books, this organization gives an additional US\$3,000 for books plus two computers. ProNica has helped three other libraries: the Acahualinca Library, the Quinchos library, and the Yahoskas girls' house. Due to financial problems, however, Books for Life has yet to award the promised books and computers to Achuapa. Achuapa librarian Raphaela Valverde picked up the ProNica donation and eagerly awaits the matching donation.

### *Estelí Library*

The Estelí Library was awarded US\$1,776 for materials for children's arts and crafts. They reached out to poor schools outside Estelí and to barrios where traveling alone to the library is difficult. They also take books to the men's prison. Librarians encouraged 130 school children to begin a reading club. ProNica funds purchased the materials for all these events. At two schools, they've held ongoing story hours for 150 children with story-telling, games, play acting, drawing, snacks and a piñata. On June 7th, International Day of the Child, they held a big event called the Carnival of Children's Stories for 360 children. They made decorations with the ProNica-provided materials. They held a drawing contest, exhibition and a poetry contest. At another event, staff wore costumes and acted out the story; the children then drew illustrations of the story. One hundred and eighty children participated in the different activities there. Throughout the year, they held a cinema forum in which youth watched films with discussion afterwards, a reading marathon, an event for the Day of Children's Literature. In short, during the year this most active library held fifty events to promote reading in which 3,496 children and youth participated.

### *Mama Licha's Clinic, Estelí*

Mama Licha provides sexual and reproductive health education services to poor women in and around Estelí. This year ProNica awarded US\$6,218 for pap smears, cultures, medicines, and supplies. To date, Mama Licha performed pap smears on nearly 700 women. Three had incipient cancer, but because they were diagnosed in time and received hysterectomies, all are doing well.

### *Casa Materna, Matagalpa*

In September, the Casa Materna celebrated 20 years of service to over 15,000 high-risk mothers from Nicaragua's impoverished rural areas in the Matagalpa province. ProNica has supported the Casa for ten of those years. The Casa struggles financially due to a drop in donations. Their main priorities for 2012 are a new ambulance and money

to feed the 25-30 women at a time as they await the birth of their children. ProNica awarded US\$5,000 this year for post-operative antibiotics and the basic utility bills.

#### *Casa de los Niños, San Ramon*

ProNica awarded the Casa de los Niños US\$1,014 to provide follow-up to groups of women in six isolated rural communities around San Ramon and to promote the importance of pap smears for the early detection of cervical and uterine cancer. Based on the price of pap smears at one local facility, they anticipated serving 154 women. However, another laboratory read the smears at a lower price, increasing the number of beneficiaries to an additional 86 women. Of the 240 total, 47 women received their first pap smears. Eighty per cent had at least one problem (STDs, inflammation, infection, atrophy). Attributed to the follow-up program, only one of the 240 women had cancer. Sadly, a 50-year-old woman with positive results on her first smear, died. All ProNica funds were used by July. We will encourage them to request more funds in 2012 to carry out this life-saving project.

#### *Casa de la Mujer, Rio Blanco*

New ProNica project partner, Casa de la Mujer requested and was awarded US\$2,630 for workshops, radio programs, International Women's Day celebration, brochures, posters, and basic utilities. This small group of four women had used whatever resources happened their way from visiting groups, with no follow-up or accountability. Therefore, they lacked experience in proposal or report writing and internet access. Our challenge was helping them adapt to the requirements of an official NGO so they can learn the processes to interact with and seek greater funding from other NGOs. In summary, this is a worthy challenge and the women and their organization will grow stronger with more skills.

#### *The Martin Centeno Cooperative, Rio Blanco*

The Martin Centeno Cooperative, 2 km from Rio Blanco, is also a fairly-new ProNica project partner. After bringing two student groups there in 2010, ProNica approved their request to fund latrines. The project was a huge success; they managed to build three more latrines than were budgeted.

For 2011, they submitted a proposal to create jobs and improve nutrition. During the dry months of December through May, there is no agricultural work due to lack of rain and no other work. The community requested US\$1,409 for an irrigation pump, fencing material, seeds and tools to put 10 families to work creating a large

community vegetable garden. A river along one side of the community provided irrigation. ProNica approved and delivered the funds early to facilitate early planting. Instead of ten families, fourteen became involved. Instead of planting one manzana (the unit of land equivalent to 1.7 acres), they planted nearly two with a variety of vegetables and fruit trees. Despite some setbacks, such as a faulty irrigation pump having to be replaced and local competition with the same crops which drove down the price, they harvested a hefty variety of vegetables. While they did not make as much money as hoped, they did sell some and ate a lot in the community, thereby improving the family diet. Another problem was their lack of knowledge about vegetable production. As peasant farmers they plant beans, corn and rice and raise cattle. An older father in the community with a successful garden served as a resource. They also consulted a local agronomist. Overall, it was a positive learning experience that provided collective work during a typically unproductive time of year, created income, and improved the nutrition. They now feel better prepared to do the same project next year and possess the tools to do so, thanks to ProNica.

#### OUTREACH

At the Friends Association of Higher Education (FAHE) conference at Bryn Mawr in June, ProNica was represented

by me and ProNica board member and UF professor Tim Fogarty, and former volunteer Megan Barolet-Fogarty. We networked with a group specifically interested in student delegations and semester-abroad programs. After the conference, I traveled to other schools and organizations to promote ProNica delegations. In Managua, ProNica attends weekly Ben Linder House

presentations where the international solidarity community meets. Quaker House guests learn about ProNica and, whenever possible, visit our projects. Groups from Sacramento, the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, Small Steps, Charity4Life, and a German group visited La Chureca and Acahualinca Women's Center.

#### VOLUNTEERS

This year we coordinated two volunteers. Eighteen-year-old Hannah Bowen of Lewisburg, PA, worked on an organic coffee farm and for Casa del los Niños for ten months. Quaker Maggie Harrison from Philadelphia, PA

*See Report on page 4*



ProNica Director Melissa Ajabshir visits with La Chureca children in October

worked with

Mama Licha's clinic in Estelí.

### DELEGATIONS

Due to the economy, there was less study abroad. ProNica hosted three student delegations from Washburn University, the University of Redlands (CA), and Wilmington (OH) College. In February, ProNica hosted a Friends Witness group consisting of six adults.

### QUAKER HOUSE

Quaker House was renovated to increase airflow for our tropical climate. Louvered doors, decorative open block over doorways and raised ceilings



Two Quinchos at the San Marcos farm

allow more breezes. It continues to be a favorite respite for travelers.

### MANAGUA WORSHIP GROUP

On first and third Sundays, Meeting for Worship is held on the Quaker House patio. A core group of five adults and two children is joined periodically by a few others, including travelers in Nicaragua. We are committed to First Day School, as our young couple and children are vital to our existence.

### THE CONSEJO

The ProNica advisory group in Managua, is six individuals: ProNica Program Coordinator (US), ProNica Delegation Leader (Spain), Julieta Martinez (Nicaragua), Father Denis Hebert (Canada), Armando Ramirez (Nicaragua), and Luis Enrique Cruz (Nicaragua). The consejo meets once a year in November to review and recommend project proposals to the US committee.

2011 was a busy and productive year in Nicaragua. □

## Eight Dead in Floods; Rains Continue

Exerpt from El Nuevo Diario, 17 October 2011

In October, the eighth death was announced as a result of flooding in every part of Nicaragua except the Atlantic Coast Region. Government agencies reported that 25,000 people have been affected by the flooding with 2,000 families evacuated to 95 temporary shelters. Over 3,000 homes have been flooded, 300 destroyed and 1,000 damaged. One hundred fifty miles of roads have been damaged; an estimated US\$6 million in repairs will be needed.

Lake Xolotlan (Lake Managua) is rising to dangerous levels as it did during last year's rainy season. It reached 138 feet above sea level, 20.8 inches less than last year's maximum of 140 feet. If the Lake continues to rise, the government would evacuate 3,000 people who live on its shores. Even if the rains return to normal intensity, the Lake would probably pass its 1993 record level. Merchants with stalls at the Managua dock on the Lake expressed concern

as they watched the waters rise to cover parts of the area. One vendor was worried because sales dropped just as they were picking up for the December holiday season. Twenty-eight people have died in weather related deaths during the current rainy season which began in May.



Alan David Figueroa Cruz in Achuapa, one of the worst hit communities in Nicaragua

Raul Artiga of the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) said, "Climate change is not something that is going to come; we are suffering it [now]; this [weather] is more evidence of the vulnerability ... with which our societies are going to have to live." In the 1960s and 1970s, there would be one event like this per decade; in the 1980s two events; in the 1990s four; and between 2000 and 2010 there were seven. He added, "In this new decade, we now have the first and we ask ourselves how many more will there be?" □

*Due to water scarcity in Achuapa, peasant farmers rely heavily on gravity-fed drip irrigation and ram pumps which replenish the holding tanks. In tragic irony, a deluge of water from recent floods destroyed many of these irrigation systems. Twelve entire systems were completely destroyed; each costing \$500. Eight ram pumps were lost, costing \$200. Total cost for all is \$7,600. To sponsor a single replacement or the whole, earmark your contribution "Achuapa floods."*

## Free Tubal Ligations Provide Stability

Carmen Gonzales, Delegation leader

Evelyn Guadamuz, a 25-year-old mother of 5 chose to have a tubal ligation at the Acahualinca Clinic, and told ProNica, "I had my first son at age 16, and he is 9 now. My youngest is only 1 year old. My first three kids are from one father, and the two last ones are by my present husband. It was a big mistake to get pregnant at age 16 because I could not attend school any longer. I would get upset when I saw my friends having fun, while I was confined to my home, taking care of babies. My husband is a waiter and agrees that permanent birth control is the best for us. Thanks so much for your support."

Another recipient of the free tubal ligations offered to low income women at Acahualinca is Yesenia Carolina Rivera. She told ProNica, "Because I am still young and already have 5 children (I decided to have a tubal ligation). I got pregnant while taking contraceptives and my husband doesn't make enough to make ends meet. He works in the landfill searching for scraps. Now we will be able to offer a better future to our children. Many thanks to ProNica for the support for us who are poor."

Impoverished local women who are looking for a permanent form of birth have access to tubal ligations, and ProNica is proud of our sponsorship for this program and of our long relationship of accompaniment, support and respect with the Acahualinca Women's Center.

In 2008 the Clinic began the tubal ligation program for multiparous (with more than 4 children) women. The first group was 20 women and no men. In 2009, a man, concerned for his wife, joined the second group. Later, 4 more men applied, including an evangelical pastor whose wife was ill.

Silvia Cisneros Hernández is the nurse in charge of the family planning program, where the vast majority of patients are women. She points out that while vasectomies are simpler than tubal ligations, men in Nicaragua are reluctant due to fear that the procedure will cause

impotence. Demand for tubals is so huge that there is no need to advertise; women come because friends or acquaintances refer them. Whenever funds are available, another program begins, starting with the women on the long waiting list. ProNica is grateful to our supporters for making this vital service available to impoverished families.

Acahualinca, where the clinic is located, is a poor neighborhood in Managua adjacent to La Chureca, the largest municipal dump in Central America. La Chureca is home for several thousand people who live off the garbage, exposed to health risks of breathing the smoldering, poisonous fumes of decomposing inorganic matter.



Evelyn Guadamuz, recipient of a tubal ligation in Acahualinca clinic

Most families in Acahualinca are headed by single mothers with an average of four children, who struggle in a country with widespread underemployment. Scrounging for discards in the dump and prostitution are common jobs

for many women, men and children in Acahualinca. The Women's Center focuses on holistic health, education and dignity. The medical clinic offers complete gynecological services, family planning and sex education.

In Nicaragua, permanent birth control means health for women, more food for the family, and better chances for families to live with dignity. These women greatly appreciate your contribution to their welfare. \$75 covers the cost of one tubal ligation. □

*To support women's health, mark your check "Ruth Hyde Paine Fund."*

## 2011 Stateside Report

Twelve Yearly Meeting gatherings displayed ProNica literature. ProNica attended local Circus McGurkis, FGC and SEYM gatherings. ProNica was nominated for a Peace & Humanity Award by local WMNF community radio. Miami Friends Meeting and Gainesville Friends Meeting held fundraisers and hosted board meetings. Pam Haigh attended the Acahualinca Beauty School graduation. Lin Jorgensen organized the Potters for Peace collaborative exhibit for Nicaraguan potters at the annual NCECA conference. Volunteers David Sinclair & Julie Scheidt and Eckerd student intern Daniel Heim wrote thank you letters, researched projects and helped plan events. ProNica began paying rent for the office space. Semi-retired Davida Johns made her final visit and new Director Melissa Ajabshir made her first visit to Nicaragua. □

## Daniel Ortega is President for a Third Term

In November Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega was re-elected for a third term by an overwhelming margin - 63% of the vote. While celebrations erupted throughout Nicaragua when the results came in, critics charged that Ortega's candidacy was illegitimate. They argued that he was only able to run because of an unconstitutional reversal of a term limit law by the Nicaraguan Supreme Court. Ortega has long been a controversial figure, having great popularity with the leftist Sandinista party since his first term as president in the 1980s and having often been criticized by Nicaraguan business leaders. While international election observers noted being blocked from some polling sites, they confirmed that those incidents did not change the final result. □

*Casa Materna in Matagalpa ambulance fundraising update: Of the total cost of \$45,000, \$18,000 has been raised, still needed is \$27,000. Please mark your donation "ambulance".*

*Donations can be made to any specific project. Just let us know which is your preference. And thank you for your continued and generous support.*

### Jeanne Nash in Memoriam

Lillian Hall, Program Coordinator

On May 29th, 2011, ProNica lost a dear friend and faithful supporter. Jeanne Nash, a Quaker from Fort Collins, Colorado, had supported ProNica-partner libraries for as long as I can remember. She had made several trips and truly loved the people of Nicaragua, especially its children. Back home she would do a variety of activities to raise funds for libraries. She knitted small bears and made jewelry to sell at crafts fairs in order to raise the money to buy books to send to Nicaragua. She once told me that each day before getting out of bed she would knit one little bear while her husband showered. Those little bears bought hundreds of books for children in rural villages such as Achuapa and urban slums like Acahualinca. We cannot even put a number on how many children benefited from Jeanne's generosity and humanitarianism.

Her determination to help could not be daunted. In the early years, Jeanne chose and bought books at a discount she had arranged with Scholastic, Inc. She neatly packed the beautiful books into boxes and in the empty corners and crevices tucked little surprises: a bar of soap, pencils, a little stuffed animal. The tightly packed boxes were then taken to the US Postal Service to be shipped by boat in M-bags. When the Postal Service suspended M-bag service, Jeanne didn't flinch. She simply found another way: sending packages of books to Nicaragua-bound travelers



In 1998 Jeanne Nash holds books bound for Nicaraguan children  
Since 2006, Jeanne gave over \$20,000 towards libraries

and later, sending the money itself to buy books locally. She had a gift for choosing beautiful, relevant books in Spanish which were practically devoured by the children who received them.

When I traveled to Tucson, Jeanne would call and we would have lengthy conversations. She always wanted to know: what do the children need? She was eager for news from each and every project. What struck me was not only her boundless enthusiasm and energy, but her sensitivity to what is it that they need? Not 'what old books and stuff can I clean out of my garage to send to Nicaragua?' She only wanted to send the very best: the most beautiful books in the language of the children. Books that would inspire, motivate, entertain, and have a message.

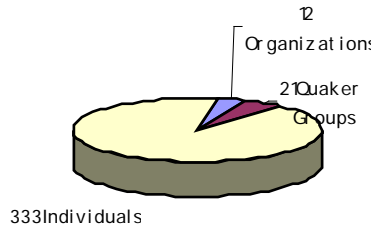
Jeanne was a great friend to ProNica, to the people of Nicaragua and to me personally. Without fanfare, she simply did good deeds each day. In Nicaragua, we call that

'trabajo de hormigas', the work of ants. Like the little ant that carries hundreds of times its own weight; Jeanne did just that. And in typical Jeanne fashion, she even thought how she could continue to help her beloved libraries and the children even after her passing and put ProNica into her will. Though Jeanne is no longer with us, her legacy continues and the children continue to read. □

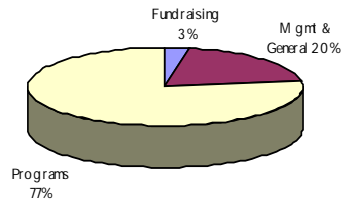
# 2011 Supporters - Thank You!

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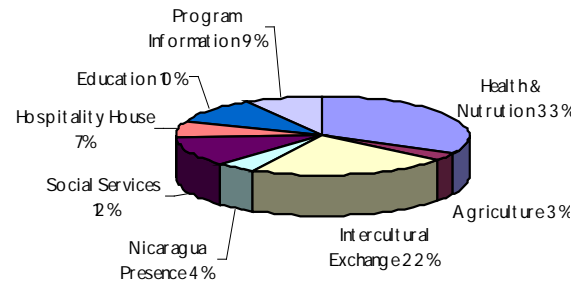
## CONTRIBUTORS



## EXPENSES



## PROGRAM SERVICES



## THANKS TO YOU

*Nicaraguan grassroots groups are transforming lives one barrio at a time. Thanks to you one small corner of our world is a better place. We help because of you!*

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- Sullivan, Margaret
- Sullivan, Sharon
- Swartz, Deborah
- Tahir, W Leonard
- Tahir, Amira
- Tait, Nancy
- Tallahassee Friends
- Taylor, Nancy
- Taylor, Susan
- Taylor, Ted
- Teipe, Emily J
- Thomasson, June
- Thomsen, Craig
- Triscritti, Nancy
- Tucker, Joan & Norval
- Umbanhowar, Hendrika
- Valley Friends Meeting
- Vashon Friends Worship Group
- Visalia Friends
- Vura-Weis, Dorothy E
- Walsh, Andrea
- Washburn University
- Webber, Albert & Marilyn
- Webber, Marki
- Welsh, Margaret
- Westberg, Jane
- White, Alan
- Whitman Family Trust
- Wilkins, Nilufer
- Wilson, Ernest & Beth
- Wismer, Samuel
- Wolcott, Myra & Roger
- Wolfe, Barbara & Alvin
- Wood, Gertrude
- Yakobchuk, Natalya
- Yeany, Mary & Tim
- Yeatman, John
- Yellow Springs Friends Meeting
- Yepes, Beverly
- Yocum, Cecilia
- Zayas, B.A. Clary
- Zielke, Wilbur
- Ziffer, Carolyn Kinnard
- Zweber, Jennifer
- Zweifer, Andrew
- Zwirner, Rodman

Casa  
Cuáquera



José and Panchita welcome you

### Quaker House

Hospitality house offers travelers simple lodging in Managua. Located in a quiet residential neighborhood, convenient to shopping, banks and restaurants. Individuals, groups, meeting space, wifi, fully equipped kitchen or catering available.

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# PRONICA

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Please remember to invest in a better world- whatever you can give.*

Generous donors accept the challenge to fill the gap between resource and need

\$1.20 provides one nutritious lunch

\$1,200 provides food for one month

\$50 feeds 45 children one lunch meal

\$3,600 provides food for three months

\$300 feeds these children for one week

\$14,400 provides La Chureca children food for one year

**Will you ease both burdens of affluence and poverty?**

2012 grant requests total over \$67,000 for: \$8341 for libraries, \$35,000 for food, \$19,000 for health, \$5,000 for a micro-credit program.

In December, Pronica's Nicaraguan consejo (advisory committee) review and make recommendations. Then the stateside projects committee approves project proposals. In January, funds are disbursed.

Grant awards depend on funds raised.

Please be generous to help us assist our Nicaraguan partners.

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La Chureca girl at lunch