



December 2014  
Vol 27 No 4

# PRONiCA

## Annual Report 2014

*Working in Solidarity with Nicaraguan Grassroots Organizations for 27 Years*



## Impacting Social & Educational Change Together

Brazilian philosopher, Paulo Friere, encouraged us to view education as, "...the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world."

To this day, his advice remains at the foundation of ProNica's dual missions of grassroots partner accompaniment and education for social change.

As Quakers and other peacemakers across the religious and secular spectrum, whether or not we ever achieve the ideal set out by Friere, we are indeed called to strive for it.

In 2014 ProNica strived, and we had an excellent year amidst the continued struggle. We can't thank you enough for helping make it all possible.

May we endeavor to participate together in the transformation of the world, now and for years to come.

Abrazo,

Melissa Ajabshir

ProNica Executive Director

Pictured:  
Acahualt Preschool  
teachers and students  
By Clay Agsten



## News from Nicaragua

December 2014, Vol 27 No 4

### ProNica Board

Herb Haigh, President	Pam Haigh, Treasurer
Johannes Werner, Secretary	Kaye Edwards, Director
Kathy Hersh, Director	William Rogan, Director

Executive Director:	Melissa Ajabshir
Co-Program Directors:	Ada López Rivera & Ramón Sepulveda Velez
Program Assistant:	Milton García
Executive Assistant:	Barbara Wright
Financial Specialist:	Caroline Lanker
Quaker House Housekeeper	Francisca "Panchita" Fletes
Quaker House Watchman	Jose Antonio Fletes

**Other Contributors:** Laura Hopps  
Carl Agsten, cover photo  
Davida Johns, photos

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

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

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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## Greetings from our New Co-Program Directors

Dear Friends,

We can hardly believe it's already been two months since we joined ProNica. We are very grateful for the warm welcome and all the amazing stories shared by the staff and Board members from our very first day!

Meeting ProNica partner communities has been incredibly invigorating. From the inspiring work of the Women's Cooperative in Rio Blanco, to the remarkable example of Acahualt's work with the most marginalized, to the life-changing work of Los Quinchos with children, we have witnessed how "God comes to us in the mist of human need," and how those pressing needs "demand a community response." (Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Faith and Practice, 23.48, Parker J Palmer, 1977)

We see this response in ProNica's work, and collectively with all of you, we will continue to accompany our partners in their struggle for peaceful conditions, and generate educational experiences that could give us a better understanding of the root causes of injustice.

As we prepare for next year's exciting opportunities and challenges, we identify with a verse from the acclaimed Uruguayan poet, Mario Benedetti, that reminds us that, "...in the street arm in arm we are many more than two".

We are clearly not alone; we are part of a remarkable team of supporters, volunteers, advocates, board members, staff and partner communities, whose commitment of building peace through solidarity will continue its fruitful path in spite any obstacles we may possibly face.

In peace and solidarity,

Ada López  
Rivera

&

Ramón  
Sepulveda  
Velez



## Letter from our Board President

Dear Friends,

War, weather, and the misfortune of being a potential passageway from the Atlantic to the Pacific are just some of the factors that have contributed to Nicaragua being one of the most impoverished nations in our hemisphere.

Since 1987 ProNica has supported Nicaraguans with reconstruction and recovery from all of these hardships and much more. We have worked alongside Nicaraguans as they provide jobs, sanitation, maternal health, refuge from life on the streets and so many reasons to hope. Through it all, as a person who was by chance born in North America, I have watched with admiration as Nicaraguans confront these strong headwinds and continue to make progress toward a better life.



Conditions have steadily improved in Nicaragua, and with the help of so many volunteers and supporters, ProNica's ability to provide financial assistance to our project partners has also enjoyed steady growth. It seems that every new year has been more rewarding than the last. We don't know how far this will take us, but we are grateful in spirit for the journey.

Since our fall newsletter, our cherished "In-Country Director," Laura Hopps has returned to the States to be closer to family and pursue an exciting new educational path. During her time with us, Laura organized and developed our educational delegation program to a level where we are confident of our financial stability. Our delegations not only provide rich opportunities for intercultural exchange, but the proceeds from them pay all of our administrative costs and allow us to send one hundred percent of donations toward program services.

We are very grateful to Laura for all of her wonderful work, and we will definitely miss her. However, after an arduous recruitment and interview process, we are blessed and excited about the new co-leadership of Ada López Rivera and Ramon Sepulveda Velez, known to us simply as, "Ada and Ramon." This wonderful couple brings with them ample experience with community development, delegation facilitation, fundraising, micro-loans, and many more skills that will greatly contribute to the continued growth of ProNica. We will hold them in the light as they go forward. My wife, Pam, and I will meet them in-person for the first time in early December, as we and several other Board members travel to Nicaragua to visit our project partners and to attend the 2014 graduating class of the Acahualinca Beauty School. We go every year, so if you're interested in accompanying us some time, please let us know; we would love to have you along.

Our mission goes beyond partnering with Nicaraguans; it is also to educate non-Nicaraguans. As everyone knows, the best way to accomplish that is by encouraging people to go and experience for themselves ProNica's work in this poverty-stricken nation that is both two hours and light years from our shores. Pam and I have been told by ProNica partners many times over the years how valuable our presence is to them. They say it indicates that we are still with them, that we intend to continue, and that we will support them in all that they do.

We are also very pleased to announce the launching of a brand new website. Our incredibly generous volunteer webmaster of two decades, Cynde Mercer, decided to pass the torch instead of taking on yet another overhaul as she prepares to retire. So members of our Board gave much of their valuable time toward this important project, and it will be online any day. Please stay tuned for that event; and remember that we will make that announcement on Facebook and by email, so please be sure ProNica is on your FB list, and that we have your current email address. We are looking forward to lots of, "Likes."

Sometime close to Thanksgiving you will also receive a card which tells the story of a Christmas visit that Pam and I made to Nicaragua years ago. I hope you enjoy it, and I hope you will join us once again by using the enclosed envelope to make your donation as a meaningful way of connecting with ProNica's important work.

Thank you for your continued interest.

Mind the light, Herb Haigh

# Collectively with All of You and our Partner Communities, ProNica Made a Big Difference in 2014!

By ProNica Program Directors, Ada López Rivera & Ramón Sepulveda Velez



Chatters family delegates bring gifts of baby clothes to Casa Materna

## Casa Materna, Matagalpa

The opening of dozens of government maternity houses for high risk pregnant mothers across the country of Nicaragua, is in a sense, a recognition of the success of a model

originally implemented in Cuba and then pioneered in Nicaragua by Casa Materna (CM) Matagalpa.

Due to the successful replication of similar maternity houses all over Nicaragua, CM Matagalpa is thrilled to report a **40% reduction** of intakes at their center during 2014. Because CM Matagalpa sets the national standard, they now receive the very highest risk pregnancies, not only from the province of Matagalpa, but from the furthest reaches of Nicaragua.

ProNica has supported them with their implementation of a series of highly effective family planning workshops led by the CM outreach team and a network of mid-wives who also serve as community health promoters to families in remote rural areas. ProNica funds CM Matagalpa's utility payments to keep the lights on at the Casa, family planning methods, and post-operative medications for women.

## Domestic Violence Network of Rio Blanco

In 2014, **327 victims of violence** were supported with psychological and legal counseling and accompaniment through the process of healing and seeking justice. ProNica provided funds for the transport of victims from Rio Blanco to Matagalpa (2.5-hour drive by bus), in order for them to follow-up with psychologists and police.

Around **95 acres** of land were planted with Cacao trees, securing future income generation for 35 families, while at the same time, protecting water resources and reducing the risk of landslides in the Cerro Musun Reserve. ProNica collaborated in this important project (sponsored by an international foundation) by funding the agricultural technician's salary, who works closely with farmers to ensure successful plantings.

Additionally, **50 home gardens** were established. Families in the remote region of Rio Blanco are now planting a significantly wider variety of crops. Cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, green peppers, plantains, taro roots, and other

vegetables are now parts of a landscape for families who previously raised cattle, almost exclusively.

**One solar panel** was installed in the delivery room at the public hospital of Rio Blanco to provide safer conditions for births, especially during nights when there is no electricity. This was a very special and very welcomed initiative of the 2014 Rutgers University delegation that ProNica facilitated.

## Martin Centeno Rural Community Action Committee

**1 new roof** for the main community gathering place was installed with support from the Rutgers University delegation that ProNica facilitated.

**3 of the most dilapidated homes** in the community received significant structural upgrades, improving the habitability, comfort and soundness of the houses. While it may sound like a small number, this incremental improvement represents how the Martin Centeno Community has developed since they were displaced by war in the 1980s. Community leaders assert that, "A brick laid down on a wall means much more than fired clay... it is the continuous process of building the community foundations itself."

In spite of the enduring wounds of war, especially among the adults who recall the scourge and losses so vividly, the determination of founding members, like Doña Adilia, have created a vibrant nurturing environment for the coming generations. Yorlene and Jessenia, strong and inspiring youth leaders—and great storytellers—are just two of the examples of how peace is constructed step by step and generation to generation.



AVP Workshop with the Domestic Violence Network of Rio Blanco

## Alternatives to Violence (AVP)

**15 members of ProNica partner communities** have become AVP workshop facilitators and have led the expansion of workshop facilitation at the grassroots level.

**3 AVP workshops** were held with domestic violence victim advocates and victims in Rio Blanco. Workshop facilitators are Nicaraguans who feel called to this work, and they are unpaid volunteers. ProNica provides lodging at Quaker House



in Managua, meals and transportation for the workshop leaders and participants. The participants from our partner communities express deep appreciation. One member of the Rio Blanco Womens' Cooperative expressed that, "The AVP process is one of the most important collaborations that ProNica has engaged with our communities in; the tools we have gained will forever remain of immense value to us."

### Casa del Niño Mobile Health Clinic

**1,630 women in 15 rural communities** of San Ramón received free pap smears with the support of ProNica. Francis, the lab technician who often walks several kilometers across mountainous terrain in order to conduct the tests, is very proud of "being part of a team that is helping rural women overcome ancestral machista obstacles," while saving lives through the early detection of cervical cancer.

Casa del Niño hosted their annual sexual education and health fair in 2014, which was **attended by 153 teens** from the greater San Ramón area. The high level of interest and attendance is largely credited to the Youth Cooperative for Development, an organization whose presence in remote communities greatly impacts the success of sexual health campaigns in the region.



Acahualt Beauty  
School Student

### Acahualt Women's Center

Acahualt continues to be a true friend even at the most difficult times. While facing enormous financial challenges with the loss of their primary funder, they have managed to give sexual and reproductive health services to more than **1,500 women**.

Around **100 victims** of different forms of domestic violence have been provided counseling and legal support. **20 women from the informal**

**working sector** received full scholarships for a year-long cosmetology course, and will graduate this December.

Still at the forefront of HIV prevention in the Acahualinca neighborhood, one of the most blighted in Managua, the Center educates workers at other community organizations around the city, emphasizing the importance of continued HIV testing and outreach campaigns.

As a sanctuary for the most marginalized, Acahualt has supported sex workers and LGBT community groups (who often suffer significant discrimination in the mainstream health system), in the process of reclaiming their rights and transforming cultural perceptions. ProNica funded staff salaries and cervical cancer campaigns.



Animal therapy at  
Las Yahoskas

### Los Quinchos Rehabilitation Program for Former Street Children

In 2014 Edelia became the **first Yahoska from the girls residence to start college**. She is a shining example of how the children's inner strength and Los Quinchos' empowering and caregiving efforts have changed so many lives.

**Thousands of smiles and stories of triumph** were exchanged between Quinchos youth and visitors, who glimpsed the complexity, struggles and even fun in one another's lives. Around **300 children were served in the street outreach and residential programs, 35 of whom were girls** from the Yahoska residence.

ProNica provided food and operating expenses for both the Yahoskas girls residence and El Filtro outreach program near Managua's enormous open-air market, a magnet for children living on the streets. ProNica also funded the salary for the Quinchos librarian.

### Library of Estelí

In 2014, the Library had approximately **2,500 monthly users and visitors**. The Library hosted story time, craft workshops, drawing and painting workshops, children's games, educational movies, biographical expositions, meetings among writers from Estelí and all over the country, adult literacy classes, computer courses, and more. About **850 children from local schools** benefited from the literacy activities conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Education.

ProNica funded **12 "Reading at the Park" events which were attended by about 480 children**.

### Achuapa Library

As the only Library in the region of Achuapa, they conducted a very popular reading contest and held multiple engaging reading circles. They also sponsored a series of violence prevention and sex education workshops for 15 to 18 years-olds.

ProNica funded elementary and middle school textbooks, a program initiated by the Library to increase school retention rates, since most students in the region cannot afford text books.



Craft time at the  
Achuapa Library

# Hundreds of People & Organizations Taking Action in Support of Practical & Innovative Solutions at the Grassroots Level

Thank you, ProNica Donors and Sustaining Supporters!

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## We're Building Dreams in 2015: Join Us!

Please join us in offering solidarity to our partners struggling for peace and justice.

Every contribution counts toward making these dreams a reality!

ProNica's grassroots partners requested the following grants for 2015:

### Los Quinchos—Total Grant Request: \$32,579

- Las Yahoskas girls home for 35 girls recovering from sexual exploitation and abuse (\$17,465)
- Filter House outreach for street children in Managua's Oriental Market (\$13,217)
- Library for Los Quinchos residential programs, open to the local community (\$1,897)

### Acahualt Women's Center—Total Grant Request: \$18,348

- Health Clinic Services: Cervical Cancer campaign and other clinic services in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods (\$8,209)
- Beauty School job training, empowering women to start small business (\$5,100)
- Support Community Library (\$5,040)

### Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)—Total Grant Request: \$3,000

- 5 workshops for Pronica partners in the nonviolent conflict resolution by Nicaraguan AVP facilitators and partners trained in 2014 (\$3,000)

### Martin Centeno Community—Total Grant Request: \$4,011.06

- Continue repairs of community center (\$600)
- Reparations of 3 houses in serious disrepair for the most vulnerable families (\$3,312)
- Repair bridge that connects the community with the nearest town (\$999.06)

### Domestic Violence Network of Rio Blanco—Total Grant Request: \$3,475

- Establish 50 kitchen gardens, each one planted with at least five different crops
- Establish 15 medicinal gardens, each one planted with at least five different plants
- Promote the exchange of experiences in the preparation of natural home remedies
- Conduct workshops on the management and importance of the kitchen gardens

### Casa del Niño Community Center—Total Grant Request: \$1,640

- Cervical Cancer Mobile Clinic & Sex Health Fair

### Library of Estelí—Total Grant Request: \$500

- Children's educational reaching over 1,600 kids with, reading promotion and arts and crafts activities

### Library of Achuapa—Total Grant Request: \$5,000

- Reading skills development and Sexual Education and Health workshops for youth leaders

☐ **Yes, I support solutions at the grassroots level!**

**Donation** ☐\$25 ☐\$50 ☐\$75 ☐\$100 ☐Designate my gift to ProNica Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount:** ☐\$250 ☐\$500 ☐Other \_\_\_\_\_ ☐Use my gift where most needed

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## Inside this Issue:

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Co-Program Directors, Ada &  
Ramón

## ProNica Facilitated 9 Delegations and 2 Summer Interns in 2014

We are grateful to our 2014 volunteers and delegates for opening their hearts and minds to learn from our community partners, and we are grateful to our community partners for sharing their homes, work, knowledge, spirit and examples. In addition to summer volunteers, Tiffany Smith and Rebecca Kuperberg, ProNica's educational immersion program consisted of hosting groups from Eckerd College, Rutgers University, Washburn University Bonner Scholars, Washburn School of Nursing, The College of New Jersey, Haverford College & Bryn Mawr College, as well as Luella Chatters and her family. The second annual ProNica Board & Friends Delegation takes place in early December.

Delegates learned about Nicaragua's history and its ties to their own. They connected local concerns to global economic, environmental, and social issues. They worked in cooperation with community partners to install solar panels in the delivery room of the public hospital of Rio Blanco, planted 1,000 banana plants with Quinchos to support food security, helped rebuild the school of El Limon, in Esteli, offered CPR trainings to community health workers, and more!

In 2014 proceeds from our Intercultural Exchange Programs exceeded our administrative costs, allowing 100% of donations to go toward Program Services.

### FY 2013-2014 Income

General Donations	\$60,584	27%
Earmarked Donations	\$37,509	17%
Intercultural Exchange	\$105,405	47%
Fund Accounts	\$13,501	6%
Hospitality House	\$4,772	2%
Other	\$593	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$222,367</b>	<b>100%</b>

### FY 2013-2014 Expenditures

Fundraising	\$10,041	4%
Management & General	\$35,142	15%
Program Services:		
Social Services	\$34,147	15%
Agriculture	\$3,876	2%
Hospitality House	\$19,002	9%
Raising Awareness	\$10,286	5%
Intercultural Exchange	\$59,158	27%
Accompaniment	\$10,908	5%
Schools & Libraries	\$8,173	4%
Health & Nutrition	\$31,533	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$222,265</b>	<b>100%</b>