

Opportunity International Nicaragua

Spring 2023

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NICARAGUA

- ▶ Helping farmers earn a fair income for their crops through the yucca processing plant.
- ▶ Ensuring children get a good education at the Emprendedora Technical School
- ▶ Deploy financial resources and loans to fund community projects.

OUR GRATITUDE

Thanks to your belief in Opportunity International’s work in Nicaragua, we are making an impact in the daily lives of farmers, teachers, children, youth, women, and entrepreneurs. Thank you for walking with the people of Nicaragua as they create lasting change.

THE NEED

Challenges continue in Nicaragua: infrastructure, political unrest, high poverty rate (25% live below the national poverty line). With perseverance and dedication, the people of Nicaragua are working to leverage community assets to improve livelihoods.

THE SOLUTIONS

Community Economic Development is a proven, holistic, participatory approach that elicits community involvement to build strong industries and markets. It starts with recognizing a community’s local resources and tapping those resources for maximum community benefit. Social and economic development fosters community well-being. Opportunity International’s

proven three-pronged interventions of **training, financial resources, and support** enhance the community economic development process. These interventions increase incomes, create and sustain jobs, and provide affordable quality education for children and youth.

Nicaragua Community Economic Development Goals	
Economic	Equip people living in poverty to prosper through increased income, asset development, and saving strategies
Social	Develop effective local leadership as measured by diverse social networks, community problem-solving, and successful community actions.
Spiritual	Encourage love of God and love of neighbor, as measured by increased hopefulness and trust in God and redemptive family and community relationships.



Financial Support



Agricultural Training and Support



Education Training and Support

PROGRESS ON OUR WORK

Community Empowerment and Engagement

Leaders from 13 community boards—including the Quebrada and the El Comején community boards—participated in an eight-month training program to strengthen their interpersonal relationships skills. The training covered knowledge of self, communication, negotiation and conflict resolution, management of a community fund, accountability, and effective meetings. The Quebrada Community Board continues work on securing their own well, presenting before the municipality and water governing body. The El Comején Community Board is focused on building five family latrines and installing water service to one of the local churches. They successfully completed a project of building two latrines at a local church, benefitting 250 congregants.

Opportunity Nicaragua team members held community trainings in eight neighborhoods—impacting over 1,800 people—to raise awareness and address topics related to violence prevention, health, and family finances.

The annual Opportunity Nicaragua meeting included more than 50 leaders from 17 communities who had the opportunity to assess the year and share experiences on project planning, execution, and lessons learned.

Quebrada Honda Savings Group has grown to 29 members with working capital of \$2,604; 27 loans have been given for home improvement, school supplies, family businesses.

Women

This year, 41 community women from 13 communities benefited from small business loans to support their family businesses; 48 208 women from 12 communities received gynecological screenings and education.

Youth

In partnership with the Young Life Ministry, 14 new youth clubs were established to support community teens with Bible study and other spiritual activities. An average of 180 young people participate weekly.

The Heart of Our Work: Opportunity Clients



Medardo Trinidad Calero Mercado and his wife, Petrona, live in El Capulín with their children and grandchildren. Medardo sells bread door-to-door on his bicycle, while his wife, Petrona, cooks food to sell at the local market. Together, they earn enough to get by, but it was challenging to save to afford the major home improvement projects their property badly needed. Their home unstable.

Last year, they joined the Quebrada Honda Savings Group. Their first savings deposit was C\$400 (about \$11). Every few weeks Medardo added a few hundred cordobas, eventually taking out a six-month loan of C\$15,000 (about \$420).

Medardo and Petrona are on track with their payments and are committed to the mission of the savings group. It is their first time participating in any group like this, and they think it is an important organization for community members.

Education

With your support, Emprededora Technical High School is working toward being a self-sustaining school that builds upon current community development work in Nicaragua while also serving as a model school for other communities. The school is unique as students receive both a traditional high school diploma as well as a technical vocational certificate in either sustainable agriculture or tourism. Students complete more than twice the amount of required English classes per week. The school is contributing to lasting transformation in rural Nicaragua by helping promote sustainable development and encouraging youth entrepreneurship in these two promising industries.

In December 2022, **47 students graduated**—17 from agriculture and 30 from tourism; 11 of the recent graduates experienced two-month internships in their fields.

We provided three scholarship opportunities which enabled **80 students** to continue their studies either through Emprededora High School, a gap year program, or public university. Scholars who attend public university contribute about ten hours per month to the school by supporting teachers in math, Spanish, English, technology, tourism, and agriculture. Two students are preparing their thesis defense; one will graduate as an industrial engineer and the other, an English teacher. One goal of gap year programming is meeting a specific English proficiency level; technology integration boosts learning. Students created webpages, wrote blogs, recorded podcasts, and made videos.

Acquiring English skills is highly desirable; from March through November 2022, Wayzata Church (Minnesota) and the Toro Company provided volunteers to practice conversational English via phone calls; on average, each week 20 students in the 11th grade spoke with volunteers.

We reached out to our alumni to track what they are doing; we received answers from 46% of the database, representing the previous six generations. We learned that **67% of alumni are studying and 38% are working**, with 17% from each segment doing both. We will continue alumni outreach to share information on internship and employment opportunities as well as continuing education programs.



The Heart of Our Work: Opportunity Clients

Mary graduated from Emprededora in December in 2022. The youngest of seven children, she is the only child in her family to attend private school. Mary found her English classes engaging but preferred physics, chemistry, and math. She appreciated her teachers who taught learning-through-doing and supported her academically and personally.

Mary plans to attend university to study agriculture engineering. Her training at Emprededora jump-started her path to knowledge, teaching her farming techniques that are not used by her family. She has been able to learn specific strategies to help protect crops from disease and maximize their yield. Her dream is to have her own fully functioning organic farm.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Opportunity Nicaragua team is seeking support (\$550,000-\$650,000) for the following projects, advancing education and enabling community change:

Education (\$350,000-\$450,000)

- ▶ *Expansion of the dining area and outfitting for events:* add to existing space, raise roof, build stage
- ▶ *Science lab/multi-use classroom:* in support of teaching biology, chemistry, and physics as well as music classes, English language group work
- ▶ *Improvements in the farm business:* includes agricultural office, classroom, changing rooms, showers, bathroom, equipment storage
- ▶ *Expansion of the administrative building:* includes conference room, office space
- ▶ *Farm equipment, tractor implements, and greenhouses:* includes plow, rototiller, workman utility truck, two greenhouses
- ▶ *Teaching equipment and school furniture replacement:* includes equipping 10 classrooms with projectors and teachers with computers
- ▶ *Establishing new learning areas for practice:* demonstration areas for agricultural technical curriculum

Community Empowerment and Engagement (\$150,000-\$250,000)

- ▶ *Water projects fund and other infrastructure projects:* implement two water projects impacting 5,000+ beneficiaries, including improvements to the pumping equipment, storage tank or electrical system of existing aqueducts; also implement three non-water infrastructure projects impacting 2,000 beneficiaries, constructing latrines and doing church improvements
- ▶ *Spiritual development:* support the expanded Young Life model for 14 rural communities reaching 300 youth
- ▶ *Economic development initiatives:* provide training on finance and entrepreneurship for community leaders, particularly women and youth; provide seed capital for small businesses to impact 70+ families; establish two community savings groups
- ▶ *Training and leadership development:* provide leadership training to 80 leaders from 21 communities to build and foster ownership of community development plans
- ▶ *Access to health services:* provide women in 21 rural communities with access to health information and services related to self-care, cervical cancer prevention, sexual and reproductive health, PAP smear tests, psychological/emotional wellness.



“When I arrived here in 7th grade, I didn’t have any vision of the future. I didn’t see myself working or studying at a university. Later, after spending a couple of years here at Emprendedora around the teachers and my classmates, they made me look more towards the future – my work, my life, my degree, and the value of education.” – Michael, now in the 11th grade at Emprendedora Technical High School