

# Purpose and Perseverance in Nicaragua

Your Program Impact Report, Fall 2024



Despite challenges faced every day—the impact of climate shocks, increasing government controls, supply chain delays, and unexpected crises—the people we serve in Nicaragua are succeeding. The Emprendedora school continues to support students holistically and produce graduates who are changing the world. The community development work improves living conditions and creates more social cohesion.

Opportunity International believes all our brothers and sisters should have the chance to live with dignity and purpose, to live in safe and cohesive communities, and to send their children to school. Thank you for sharing this belief. Thank you for lifting up the people of Nicaragua as they build a brighter future.

## EDUCATION

Founded in 2012, Emprendedora Technical School continues to provide high-quality, relevant education to rural students in grades 7-11. The school provides:

- ▶ **Comprehensive general education and English lessons**
- ▶ **Hands-on experience operating and managing the school's organic agribusinesses**, including an egg hatchery and vegetable farm, and learning about food processing via the local yucca processing plant
- ▶ **In-depth hospitality experience** by interning at a local sustainable tourism resort, Pacaya Lodge
- ▶ **Job or college preparation assistance**, including mock interviews, resume assistance, college application workshops, and business plan evaluations

With your support, Emprendedora 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.**

### *Highlights from Spring/Summer 2024*

- 11th grade students visited Vivero Torenias and Holiday Inn hotels to expand their career-specific practical learning.
- In academic competitions, the students' abilities shone:
  - 2nd place for girls and 3rd place for boys in the municipal oratory contest
  - 1st place in the intercollegiate debate contest
  - 1st place in the departmental mathematics olympiad and 3rd place at the national level
- In athletics, we were recognized as municipal champions in Boys' Soccer and Girls' Volleyball and received 1st place in Girls' Athletics and Chess at the departmental level—and now we are preparing for national competitions.

- Additional courses were offered to 9th to 11th grade to complement and strengthen their technical skills, including marketing strategies and social media; payroll preparation; etiquette and protocol; entrepreneurship; and care for poultry and pigs.
- We visited four communities where Opportunity serves (Pilas Orientales, La Bolsa, Capulín, and La Escoba) to promote the school with local leaders. There was good attendance and high interest among the participants. Ideally, we would like to have at least 25% of new students coming from communities that our other projects serve.
- Four new University Support Scholarships were evaluated and approved, bringing the total to 16 beneficiaries for the second semester of 2024.

### *Elementary School*

- From April to July 2024, teachers at the primary school trained in and received Google Educators Certification.
- Academic evaluation results showed that 90% of the students achieved scores between 76 and 100 points. Sixth grade students and their parents visited Emprendedora; 13 out of 16 students expressed interest in continuing their secondary education at Emprendedora, although there were concerns about transportation and the monthly tuition fee.
- Progress was made on the assessment of English classes, including an English proficiency test for sixth grade students; 93% of students scored at A1 and above.

## **COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Community Economic Development (CED) 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.

Our team is piloting a shift in the community support strategy, addressing holistic development areas in a specific number of communities to achieve a greater impact on families and communities. We have strengthened the team's capabilities by providing training in the development of both strategic plans and action plans to work with community leaders and members.

During 2024Q2, we completed the execution of family infrastructure projects in 13 communities impacting 122 families and initiated the drilling of a well in the Altos Norte community. Additionally, we continue providing physical and emotional health access to women in rural communities by offering educational and awareness-raising activities, medical exams, and psychological support. We launched a series of trainings on family stewardship to educate community families on the proper use of resources. The team is also finishing the consultancy for the new youth program to be developed in 2025.

We conducted a year-one evaluation of the businesses of six young entrepreneurs from the first cohort of 2023 who received seed funding



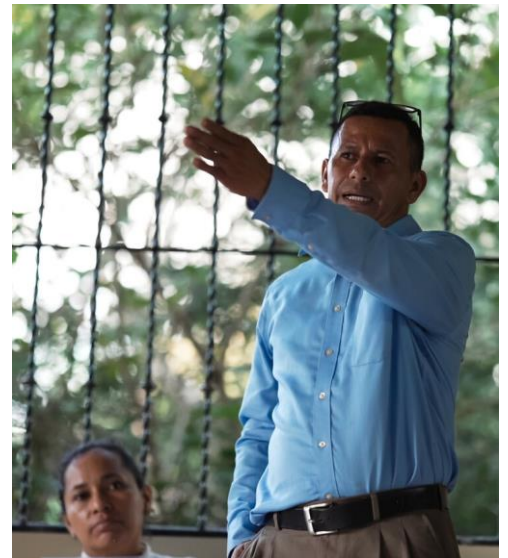
ranging from \$200 to \$400, which they have successfully repaid in full. Currently, they are earning monthly profits between \$180 and \$250. Notably, one of these young entrepreneurs is assisting her mother, a single parent, in paying off a plot of land for their future home.

## AGRICULTURE

Through a farmer-first, field-to-market approach, we provide a comprehensive program that provides smallholder farmers in remote areas with opportunities to successfully finance, plant, harvest, process, and sell their crops. We achieve this through a hub-and-spoke model that allows small farmers to access a state-of-the-art processing plant and a diverse portfolio of products (such as yuca, cassava, moringa, and plantains) for year-round harvesting opportunities.

Currently, the program serves 526 farmers—88% toward our goal. Despite the delay in the original plant expansion date and difficulties in fulfilling the commitment to purchase yuca from farmers, we achieved 93% of the target for establishing production areas for 2025.

We have committed to increasing capacity: we have placed purchase orders for the main equipment to be imported from Brazil and China, projecting plant operation with the new equipment in September. This year, we are intentionally promoting the expansion of organic areas for yucca planting. The team is working on daily tracking indicators that measure improved production efficiency and conversion, identifying opportunities to achieve the projected production levels for the next two quarters.



**Thank you for believing in the people of Nicaragua—the children, mothers and fathers, teachers, community and faith leaders. By translating your hope into financial resources, you are walking beside our brothers and sisters as they built a brighter future for their families.**

## APPENDIX

### Emprendedora School Projects

Emprendedora School Projects	Cost	Description
<i>Projects at the Entrepreneur Technical School will impact 300+ students directly</i>		
Science Lab: Architectural plans for phase 1	\$16,800	Have architectural plans drawn for a science lab to support the teaching of biology, chemistry, and physics under a hands-on methodology
Bleachers/viewing area for sports field	\$19,200	Build two sets of bleachers at sport field for students and staff to watch games
Furniture (desk, chairs, tables, ceiling-fans)	\$9,600	Replacement of damaged school furniture will enable all classrooms to have adequate desks and chairs for student learning
Equipment for students IT lab	\$12,000	Replacement of laptops in computer lab to enhance the teaching of technology at the school
Library annex room	\$36,000	Build annex room in library to provide additional space for group work and learning
Books for students	\$22,620	Provide students with English textbooks, workbooks, and audio-visual resources to enhance their language learning and proficiency
Education (teachers)	\$330,596	Salaries and support
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$446,816</b>	

### Emprendedora School Tuition Subsidy

Another way to enable access to quality education for Nicaraguan youth is to support the tuition subsidy fund. One hundred percent of the students attending Emprendedora Technical School receive financial assistance.

**The cost to send a child to school for one year is \$1,400**, which covers tuition only. Opportunity International subsidizes the cost of tuition; students only pay 10 percent of the total cost of tuition and about 20-25 percent of the students cannot afford even that small amount. Students' families must pay additional fees for uniforms, books, and tools.

We raise funds year-round; currently the school has about 300 students. **The annual tuition cost for those students totals \$420,000. We also have a fund for supplemental items such as uniforms, books, and tools.**

## Elementary School Projects

Elementary School Projects	Cost	Description
<i>Projects at the elementary School will impact 170+ students directly</i>		
Solar panel batteries and maintenance	\$3,360	Purchase of batteries and maintenance for the solar panel
Well maintenance	\$3,480	Maintenance and cleaning of the well and improvements to the electrical system
Perimeter fence phase 1	\$5,040	Build a section of the fence wall to prevent trespassing to the school
Access to school	\$3,360	Improve a section of the dirt road at the school entrance to make it passable
Education (teachers, extracurricular activities)	\$47,040	Salaries, support, extracurricular activities
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$62,280</b>	

## Community Economic Development Projects

Community Economic Development Projects	Cost	Description
Altos Norte well	\$113,100	Drilling of an additional well to improve and expand the community water system impacting more than 1,400 families
Housing improvements	\$41,760	Build latrines and house improvements that enhances the living conditions for 120+ families
Las Pilas Orientales water pipeline	\$5,220	Change sections of the pipeline in existing aqueduct to improve the water service for 60+ families
Youth sports projects	\$8,700	Support faith formation activities for youth groups and equip them with sports balls for good recreation impacting 300+ youth
Seed capital for women and youth entrepreneurs	\$55,680	Provide financial education and seed capital for 30+ women and young entrepreneurs
Women's health program	\$15,660	Provide 300+ women with access to health information and services related to self-care, cervical cancer prevention, PAP smear tests, psychological/emotional wellness workshops
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$240,120</b>	

## Program Goals and Progress

EDUCATION Goal	2024 Q2	Challenges	Next Steps
95% of ninth to eleventh grade students with results of 85 points or higher in their technical training modules grades	103%		
90% of students demonstrate the ability to comprehend and apply knowledge and skills in key financial and business areas, earning a score of 85 or higher	101%		
At least 45% of the graduates are employed, and 60% of graduates participate in at least 2 social and/or spiritual activities per year	78% (employment)		1. Include graduates in internship opportunities.
	0% (participation in events)	Finding time to work with alumni (planning, follow up, capturing their interest, response rate)	2. Target at least one social/spiritual activity in which alumni will be involved.
80% of seventh and eighth grade students obtain A1 level in English according to the Versant Proficiency Test results	125%		
70% of ninth and tenth grade students obtain A2 level in English according to the Versant Proficiency Test results	93%	1. Class size might be too larger for an optimal language lesson	1. Classes will be split into two, allowing teachers to tackle individual learning challenges and develop language competences more efficiently.
		2. Reduction of conversational practice due to having three--rather than four--volunteers	2. Secure four volunteers, allowing an extra hour for conversational practice to increase speaking practice.
		3. Adapting to new online platform	3. Expand in-class training to students, helping them to understand and apply their knowledge under teacher supervision.
		4. Technological limitations	4. Assigned one mandatory lab hour to work on the online platform in addition to the one hour required at home under parental supervision.
45% of 11th grade students reach a B1 level in English according to the VERSANT Test results	40%	1. 75% of students started 11th grade at A2 or lower	1. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Communicative Approach: Students are supported by more communicative activities connected to their technical areas of study, e.g., agronomy/tourism.
		2. Lack of experience and knowledge of taking a professional proficiency test	2. Students receive training and one-on-one tutoring on Versant Test and test taking skills in general.

		3. Strengths are focused on writing and structure rather than speaking	3. Incorporate speaking tasks in class with volunteer teachers; their native accent improves their communication skills.
72% of the commercial production will be sold, focusing on the local market and exploring opportunities in the international market	96%	1. Finding a reliable local vegetable seed supplier since many are not able to clear the seeds out of customs, causing shortages	1. We are working on attracting 10 new local customers who can potentially buy 500 lbs. of lettuce and do not require an invoice.
		2. Satisfy the demand of our customers, restaurants, and hotels, regarding the issue of invoices for each sale.	2. Reactivate the groups of parents for the sale of products.
			3. With the right inputs, increase production, by improving the productive yields of each crop.
			4. Keep on hold the exploration of opportunities in Costa Rica as the focus is on the local market and finishing the 5-year business plan.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT Goal	2024 Q2	Challenges	Next Steps
70 families with enhanced household infrastructure (latrines/home infrastructure)	174%		
1 water project impacting over 5K beneficiaries	0%	<p>1. Working on the requirements, permits, and a thorough review of the project scope demanded more time and pushed it for a later date.</p> <p>2. We have completed phase 1 out of 4. The project will be considered complete once all four phases are finished.</p>	Continue with the remaining phases, including the pumping test, installation of the pumping equipment, and electrical work. We expect to complete the project in September.
5 small infrastructure (non-water) projects impacting 2K beneficiaries	0%	The community infrastructure projects are scheduled for the second half of the year.	We are updating the development community plans and prioritizing the project to be executed.
6 community development plans/action plans completed	0%	We will work on the development plans with six new communities after implementing the community index and family surveys to assess their development levels and identify projects.	<p>1. Complete two development plans in the communities where we have applied the index and family surveys.</p> <p>2. Continue with the application of the index in the remaining four communities over the next months.</p>
480 people reached by mentors from local churches quarterly	114%		
210 devotionals conducted by 24 community boards throughout the year	98%		
20 seed capital investments for small businesses led by youth	80%		
Establish 6 trust groups with women in business	0%	<p>1. The challenge of opening bank accounts for women made us revisit this goal.</p> <p>2. We will pilot with only two groups this year.</p>	<p>1. Review and modify the established processes for the trust groups.</p> <p>2. Visit communities to identify and recruit members that qualify for the two groups in Q3.</p>