



Brick making for TECHO-aided new housing construction.

A Good Beginning

The Alliance for Communities in Action has been working in Nicaragua for over seven years. It was one of many groups that responded as news of the urgent needs and valiant struggle of the Nicaraguan people to rebuild their country from the ruins of the Somoza legacy became known to many Americans. Members of the Alliance, most of whom have previous experience working in Latin America, are committed to supporting the development efforts of grass roots, low income people. The Alliance aims to

orates with various Nicaraguan socio-economic development organizations and uses the services of local consultants and technical specialists.

The primary focus was on meeting basic neighborhood and community needs. One of the first projects was the conversion of an abandoned firehouse into a medical clinic, a facility given highest priority by the community. The Alliance provided funds for building materials and for the supervision of work by local craftsmen. The men and women of the community contributed their time and labor to complete the construction.

Subsequently, the Alliance sponsored the construction of a neighborhood store in a poor barrio of Managua. Operating as a cooperative, it provides work for the local women and basic food staples for the community.

In the small rural communities east of the city of Leon, a one hour drive from Managua, drinking water is scarce. Lacking

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A Better Future

The Alliance has begun to implement its second five year program plan. This commemorative issue will remember some of the past accomplishments while lauding its present comprehensive community development programs. The most significant efforts are being directed toward alleviating the critical lack of three major basic necessities of life -- food, shelter and pure water.

The Food For Families Program is directed to small, isolated, rural communities of farm worker families. These basic communities exist throughout many areas of Nicaragua, since they provided the farm labor for large agricultural enterprises. Because of the war that has been going on for the past seven years, many families have become displaced and resettled into smaller communities on safer but marginal land. Most of the

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LIFE SHATTERED BY HURRICANE JOAN

Have you ever sat secure and comfortable with your family in the living room during a severe thunderstorm? As the wind and rain pounded the house with increasing ferocity, the walls creaked and your level of discomfort grew. The roof seemed to shutter and you froze in agony as the wind threatened to tear your house into pieces. The discomfort turned into fear.

Hurricane Joan, the worst natural disaster in the history of Nicaragua, has victimized 324,861 persons in the same way. More than 200,000 of them were evacuated or forced to flee in

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'Housing construction is planned for refugee families who have been displaced by the war and have no place to live.'

assist them in their struggle to better their lives.

In selecting and undertaking projects, the Alliance collab-

Love Amidst the Terror

As the vehicle with the Alliance staff struggled along the treacherous mountain road bringing us closer to the chapel in the valley, our excitement rose, as did our fears. Only a few days previously, the contras had launched their fifth attack on the village of Mancotal, a small farming community whose only concern is to raise enough food to feed their families. Eduardo, the local leader of Catholic Action, witnessed the biblical scripture: "Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for a friend." He told me how close to death he really was that day. "The contras were burning houses and firing machine guns everywhere," he said. "I was being shot at by a friend who evidently had taken sides with the contras. As I rolled down the hill, I shouted out to him to let him know it was me, and luckily, he ceased his fire upon me. But he was not as lucky as I, for his superior turned to him and shot him dead for not killing me."

'Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for a friend.'



New homes in Mancotal damaged by a contra attack.

Eduardo went on to tell me that during the contra attack that day, the contras had taken some of the local people as hostages, among them was Jose, his younger brother. A North American, a Witness for Peace volunteer living in Mancotal, was also taken hostage. Nine days later, after being forced to walk with no food or water to the Honduran border, he was released and admitted to the

hospital in Managua. Jose was in the same group of hostages. To this day, the fate of Jose is still unknown. There has been no information available as to whether or not he was ever released or if he is even still alive. Eduardo and his family pray that his brother will return home one day soon still in good health.

Your prayers for Jose would be greatly appreciated. o

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fear of their lives by the fury of the storm; 116 persons have died and 110 persons are unaccounted for. Unknown numbers have been hurt. Food supplies, crops, medicines, tools, clothes and household items have been scattered and are not to be found anywhere. An estimated 186,500 people are homeless; 50,000 homes have been damaged. The Alliance is working to alleviate the problem of homelessness. Donations for our TECHO housing program are urgently needed to provide shelter for some of these homeless families.

In August, the Alliance staff visited the Santa Rita Cooperative in Teustepe. We saw Alberto and Gloria and their six children working in the hot

afternoon sun with the other members of the cooperative. They were planting 50 acres of corn in their self-help project. The seeds were dropped on the ground by hand and then pressed into the soil by the bare feet of the workers. Our Food for Families program had initiated and supported this community project so they could grow their own food supply. The corn was about four feet high when hurricane Joan stripped the stalks bare and beat them into the ground. Many hungry children and their families will have to survive for the next six months on a starvation diet until a solution can be found.

Your immediate support to the Alliance will relieve the hunger and the pain that is felt by

Alberto and his family. With your help we can begin to prepare for the next planting season.

The hurricane swept away everything in its path and left the poor survivors with nothing but their innocent lives. With your help the Alliance will assist many of these families to recover from the devastation and start to put the pieces of their lives back together again. The sick and injured need medical care. Thousands of children have to be taken care of with provisions of food, clothing and shelter. With your aid and your prayers the Alliance will be able to continue its work and provide care that responds to the present crisis. We can't do it without you. Please help. o

Life Goes On

In the small community of Tomatoya in the Jinotega region of northern Nicaragua, the hills are a fertile green, the sky is clear blue and the landscape is marked by a flutter of colorful butterflies. To reach the community we go by jeep along a rocky dirt road and then continue on foot up a steep ravine. At the top of the ravine stands a simple wooden church and a scatter of houses constructed from wooden planks.

The peacefulness and natural beauty of the area is interrupted by the sounds of artillery fire and mortar explosions from the practices being conducted by the nearby military training school. The omnipresent sounds are a constant reminder that Tomatoya is located in the war zone. Nearby communities have suffered attacks from the contras and vehicles traveling on the surrounding country roads have been ambushed. The area has been relatively calm over the last few months but the local



Planting is an important stage for Food For Families.

people fear a resurgence of the war in the coming weeks. The campesinos living in Tomatoya have been surrounded by war for years. Their lives and daily activities go on; they survive and adapt as best they can.

The people in this area are

farmers. They have always lived by the land. The region is the most productive coffee growing area in the country. However, the campesinos in these small communities are mostly subsistence farmers.

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funds for drilling by machine, wells must be dug by hand - a dangerous procedure. To accomplish this, a rope is tied to a person. As he proceeds to dig, he is lowered deeper and deeper into the ground until water is reached, usually a distance of

200 to 600 feet.

One of the Nicaraguan religious leaders who administers the local health clinic, grade school and sewing cooperative, requested our help for the community's drinking water needs. The Alliance agreed to

sponsor a water project. Based on a geological study, a 600 foot deep well was mechanically drilled. With this installation the many surrounding communities can now run their own tubing and easily tap into the well system for their water needs.

The Alliance has also provided financial and technical support to workers in production cooperatives making consumer products consisting of wood, metal furniture, bricks for construction and rope-making. Funds to purchase equipment and expand facilities are contributed by community and church support groups in the U.S. Frequently, delegations visit Nicaragua and meet on a personal level with cooperative members.

The Alliance has become more involved recently in projects of wider range and scope. One such project is located on the outskirts of the city of Teustepe.

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Milk for children of Santa Rita dairy cooperative.



Life On High

A land of breathtaking beauty, Bolivia offers some of the most spectacular contrasts on this continent. Landlocked with no seacoast, Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake in the world. La Paz, the highest capital in the world, is 2-1/2 miles high, has one million people, mostly Quechua Indians preserving colorful traditions in the midst of 30 story high rise buildings and the sounds of a modern city. Sunny all year, temperatures approach freezing at night but a 30 minute flight away brings the dense tropical rain forests with 120 degree heat and 6,000 miles of rivers forming the headwaters of the Amazon Basin. Superabundant minerals of tin and gold are literally "there for the taking" and the agricultural potential is endless.

Unfortunately, the most striking contrast is the poverty of the majority who barely survive in a land of plenty enjoyed only by a few. Most families receive 50% of recommended calories and proteins. Infant mortality is 213 per 1,000 births, one of the world's highest; 70% of the children are underfed and half die before age 10. Rarely in the news, Bolivia has the lowest health service rating in Latin America. Presently, 30,000 relocated miners drift about the country, jobless and homeless. In 1973, a house cost 56,000 pesos; today, this amount would

not buy an apple!

The Alliance has been in Bolivia since 1984 after answering a Maryknoll Sister's request to help a 3,000 family community of flood victims living in tents. They were lacking water, health care, food, electricity, clothes -- everything. In collaboration with the Catholic Church and other charitable organizations there, the Alliance trained a cadre of volunteer health workers, built a clinic, brought in medicines, helped build a community center, a bakery, a noodle factory and sewing shops. These microenterprises are operated by local women to fill family needs for nutrition and clothing and earn a few much needed pesos. To provide drinking water and reduce disease, wells were drilled using plastic pipe, which manually raises pure water from 50 feet. Agua Pura, the Alliance Water Institute, is developing a mechanical drilling rig to install low-cost wells for communities in rural areas. It is designed so Bolivians can later duplicate the rig by using local materials and skills, multiplying water well production.

An adult educational program was started so parents could deal with monumental social and economic difficulties. Donated optometrist equipment now in transit to the International Red Cross in Santa Cruz, a city of

400,000, will provide free eye examinations and glasses for many poor, who otherwise may never have that chance.

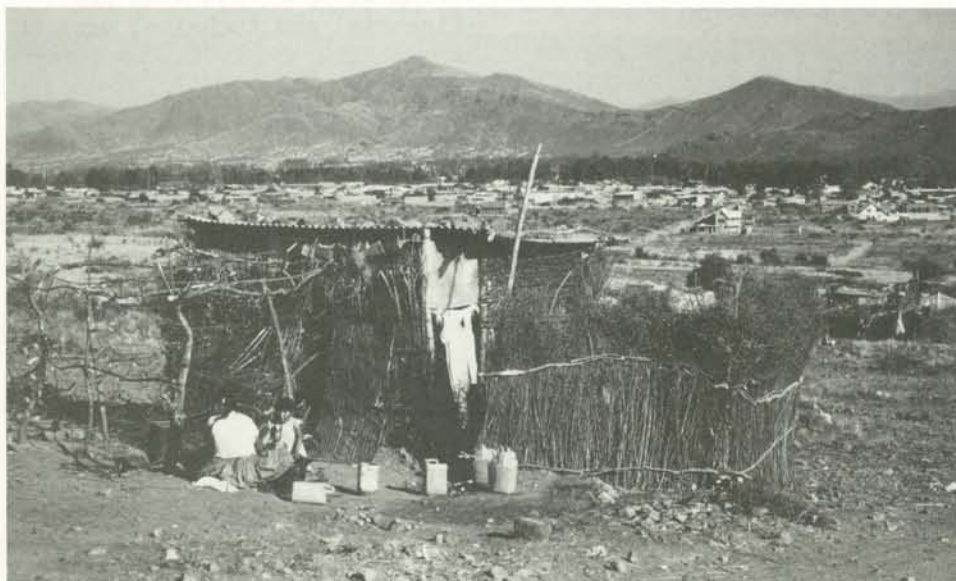
Through the Alliance's city to city program, a Union City N.J. parish is assisting the Jorochito Leprosy Hospital and school operated by the Sisters of Charity. The parish donated funds for bricks, cement and wood for the school's doors, windows and roof. The Alliance regularly provides medicines, clothing and supplies for several clinics and schools in Bolivia's vast tropical regions isolated from other economic centers.

'Unfortunately, the most striking contrast is the poverty of the majority who barely survive in a land of plenty enjoyed only by a few.'

Guayaramerin is a jungle town of 25,000 next to Brazil. It is reached only by riverboat or light plane. The Mamore Consumer Cooperative is trying to break the economic stranglehold from years of outside commercial exploitation in this rubber and Brazil nut producing region. Working with them and other campesino cooperatives, the Alliance is seeking an international loan for them. They will form a consolidated wholesale, retail and marketing operation to obtain just prices for the agricultural producers and lower costs for consumers. Earlier, the Alliance made available modest funds to build a local soup kitchen and dining hall, which provides low-cost, nutritional meals for the town's elderly, sick and marginated poor who are homeless and cannot afford to buy a meal.

In the next five years, Alianza Boliviana, as the Alliance is known in Bolivia, will develop a comprehensive program to provide shelter housing, pure water and microenterprise projects to meet the country's highest priorities and produce the greatest impact on people's health, education and well-being.

Relocated Bolivian miners live in make-shift huts.



communities exist on a very basic subsistence level. The influx of relocated families has greatly increased the burden of earning a living. Many families are composed of only women and children while the husband and father seek to earn an adequate wage in other employment areas of the rural or urban sectors. The remaining families survive through their own efforts by subsistence farming of basic staples of corn and beans. The crops are normally of poor quality and minimal yield. At best, the families are hardly able to survive. Last year's severe drought has seriously affected the food and seed supply. Reduced cash crop supply has decreased the available earned income to pauperized amounts. Many families have no money to purchase seeds, tools, fertilizers and pesticides to work the land for the next planting season. The Food For Families Program will help these families to form into cooperative or other communal groups that will be provided with the necessary tools, supplies and technicians to implement production of basic crops. The program was started this year in four different geographical areas of the country.

The TECHO Program plans to provide shelter housing for 1,000 displaced, destitute and homeless families. In some

'Many families have no money to purchase seeds, tools, fertilizers and pesticides to work the land for the next planting season.'

cases, the people collectively build their own homes with the guidance of local advisors and materials supplied by TECHO. In other projects, TECHO provides planning, technical assistance and funding from donations by solidarity and sharing groups and individuals that sponsor housing for needy families. Can your group sponsor a family by providing the \$3,000 needed to build them a house? TECHO is currently working on five projects in Nicaragua.



These children are happy to be living in a new house provided by TECHO.

These women are working in the kitchen area of a new TECHO house.



Our Water Institute, Agua Pura, provides technical assistance and funding for pure water and irrigation needs in our own programs and in many other communities in Latin America that ask for our help. The institute can count on professional consultants who volunteer services to solve technical problems and make design recommendations. We encourage participation by engineers and architects who can provide advice or make onsite inspection visits.

The Alliance is also working to unite sharing groups in the U.S. with sharing groups in Latin America. This has been done by matching support groups here in the north with development needs in the south. The idea is to promote not only essential socio-economic development but also understanding of bi-cultural, socio-historical traditions. This wholistic approach to community development allows for the growth of

the whole person in body and spirit as well as the basic structures of society. The Alliance is expanding its network of regional associates and seeks collaboration with a wide range of church, community and solidarity organizations that are interested in the developmental process. The process is reciprocal. One gives something but gets much more in return. It is a synergistic relationship that produces more good than what the participants have initially invested. We hope you or your group will be a part of this peace and development network. o

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Water - the Necessity of Life

The Water Institute, Agua Pura, was formed by the Alliance to respond to grass root project needs for pure water, the basic necessity of civilization. During the Alliance's first seven years, the projects undertaken have invariably demonstrated that potable water is an indispensable element. Many projects have been hampered by the absence or difficulty in supplying water.

Health programs started in Plan 3000, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in 1984 were handicapped by the lack of water. Addy and Joe DiBernardo discovered, in a preliminary evaluation, that more than 20,000 individuals depend upon three deep wells for water. No distribution system was in place, thus requiring that people get their water directly from ground level storage tanks at the well. One well had an elevated tank in very poor condition. Some families obtained water from a dug well on their own lot. Because of abysmally poor sanitary conditions, these wells were badly polluted.

Several stopgap measures were undertaken by the Alliance in response to urgent appeals by local groups. The leaking elevated tank was replaced by a higher tank and a short distribution system was installed. The water cooperative, established when the tanks were installed,

made plans for extending the distribution network.

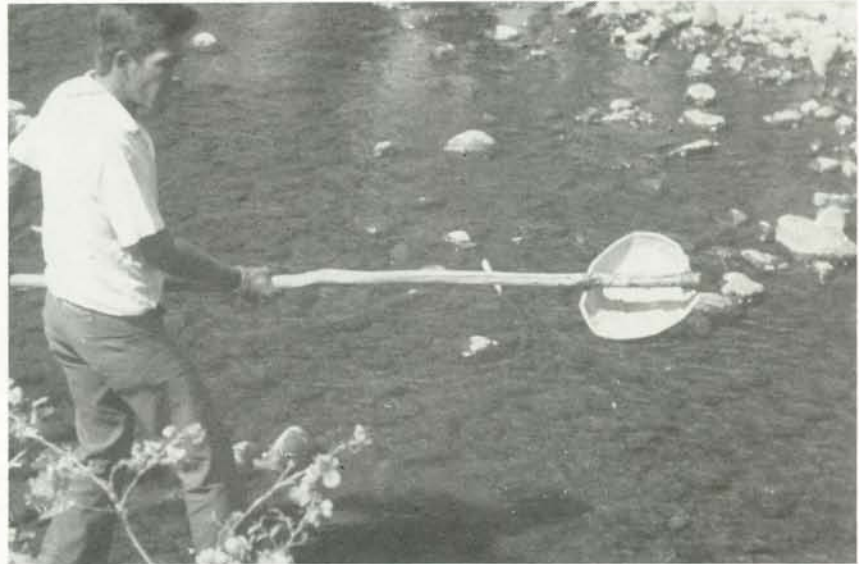
In October 1986, the DiBernardos were accompanied to Santa Cruz by Evelyn and Jim Dette, geologist and civil engineer, respectively. Evelyn and Jim had worked in Latin America (Ecuador for 2-1/2 years) and Jim's work in the U.S. included the drilling of test borings and installation of monitoring wells to evaluate ground water conditions. At the same time, a German hydrologist who had been training Bolivians in well drilling in the Altiplano region of Bolivia, joined the Dettas and DiBernardos. The group inspected the deep wells and the shallow dug wells, and

concluded that well drilling techniques being developed in the Altiplano could be adapted to Santa Cruz. Materials were

'Many projects have been hampered by the absence or difficulty in supplying water.'

purchased, and the drilling started. The method is entirely by hand. The group, assisted by Canadian volunteers, worked well into the night. The following day they completed the well to a depth of 50 feet. A hand pump was installed, which permitted the family to extract water at a rate sufficient for domestic use and relatively free from the contamination found in the shallow dug wells. As a result of this success, two men from the community were trained, and have been installing these wells in Plan 3000 and the surrounding area.

The success of this simple hand-driven well, which costs about \$100 to install, has allowed many very poor families to have their own on-site water supply. With your help the Water Institute, Agua Pura, will continue working to provide inexpensive sources of pure water for other needy families and communities.



Irrigating crops the hard way.

Hand-driven family wells are being developed in Santa Cruz.



"Link Hands in Friendship"

The philosophy statement for the Social Concerns Commission at St. Edwards Parish in Bloomington, Minnesota states that the parish does not exist in isolation, that it is present in the wider community, and that the parish exists not for itself but for the mission of Christ.

In October, 1987, the Parish Council endorsed Companeros as a parish-wide program, and has selected Our Lady of the Angels parish in Jinotega, Nicaragua as its sister parish. The Liturgy and Education Commissions have been a part of the selection

process and are actively involved in bringing this program alive for our parishioners. Letters and gifts have been exchanged between the sister parishes. Educational and medical supplies have been sent to Our Lady of the Angels, as well as a Paschal candle created especially for our sister parish.

St. Edwards has made a large financial commitment enabling Padre Douglas to found Mateo XXV Institute, born out of the need for an office of its kind in the very poorest neighborhoods and

rural areas. Their work is inspired by the Gospel of St. Matthew Chapter 25. Trained people work in four major areas: health, education, evangelization and agriculture. With St. Edwards help, Padre Douglas is able to give priority to those areas most in need.

St. Edwards in return, fulfills its philosophy statement through global outreach, and its parishioners have the opportunity to personally link hands in friendship through the Spirit of God. ○

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As is true throughout Nicaragua, the people of Tomatoya are suffering through increasingly difficult economic times. There are scarcities of almost all basic goods creating inflationary price increases on available goods.

Over the last few months the Nicaraguan government has implemented a new economic policy which has taken off most price controls and subsidies allowing prices to be set by market conditions of supply and demand. For farmers this has meant sharp increases in costs of production. Basic agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizers, pesticides, and tools such as hoes, machetes, and plowing oxen have become significantly more costly. The prices farmers receive for crops

have also increased but these won't be realized until after the harvesting and marketing.

To help communities of rural farmers such as those in Tomatoya get through this initially difficult transition

'There are scarcities of almost all basic goods creating inflationary price increases on available goods.'

period, the Alliance is sponsoring a program called Food For Families. The purpose of the program is to help finance production costs for the coming planting season and establish a rotating community fund made up of a percentage of the receipts from the harvest in order to build a self-sustaining fund for

financing subsequent purchases of inputs. The program has the further aim of giving people living in rural communities a boost in being able to cultivate many of their own basic foods during this critical time when most foodstuffs are in short supply and what is available is often at prices beyond their reach.

No one can predict what will happen to the contra war over the next several months or even what will happen in the volatile Nicaraguan economy. We do know for sure that the people living in the community of Tomatoya and hundreds like it throughout rural Nicaragua will be sustaining themselves as best they can through a lot of hard work and when possible, a little help from outside. ○

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This is an area where TB has long been endemic due to poor nutrition. The land was poor and agriculturally unproductive. Now through Alliance involvement and on-going assistance, an integral community development program is successfully underway. The program addresses critical problems in agriculture, health and housing. To date, an irrigation system has been installed, farming assistance provided, and the existing medical center enlarged.

As a result of the improvement

in agriculture, a dairy cooperative was begun that provides much-needed milk for the malnourished children of this community. Housing construction is planned for refugee families who have been displaced by the war and have no place to live.

The Nicaraguans, in their efforts to build a new society, have found themselves the unwilling victims. The seven years of U.S.-inflicted guerrilla warfare has shattered their economy and devastated

their country. Their needs have become enormous. The Alliance, using its grants and contributions, concentrates its efforts on developing shelter housing, food production and water supply programs.

We feel obligated to help the Nicaraguan people, and therefore make this urgent request to other groups involved in solidarity with Nicaragua to collaborate with the Alliance in this process. The Nicaraguan people need our help now. ○

Community Housing Project Update



Community well and classroom pavilion at Arenal.

Since the contras attacked the zone of San Pedro on January 3, 1988, the Arenal community housing project has become an integrated project, meeting the needs of both cooperative farmers and agricultural wage workers. After the attack, the fourteen families belonging to the Pomares agricultural cooperative no longer felt secure living on the hillcrest just above the Arenal community. When offered the opportunity to move down to the Arenal site, the farmers immediately accepted and began to reconstruct their homes.

The Arenal community made significant progress in the ensuing months. With the help of a construction brigade from northern California, cooperative members completed five new houses and partially built five more. These houses have been built with wood beams and zinc taken from their former homes, and cement and bricks purchased with donations. We hope that all fourteen families of the cooperative will soon be living in new homes.

Meanwhile, the second pavilion of Arenal's elementary school is now under construction. We have purchased zinc roofing material and tiles for the floor. Our

goal is to finish this pavilion by the beginning of the school semester. We urgently need funds to begin purchasing building materials for the third pavilion which we plan to begin as soon as possible.

Arenal community members continue to face problems caused by Nicaragua's economic crisis. The Oscar Turcios state tobacco farm, which provides most Arenal residents with their livelihood, is now operating at a loss, and management has laid off some workers. At the same time, last year's drought wiped out the Pomares cooperative's crop, leaving the members deeply in debt. With a recent bank loan the farmers are planting corn and beans, but insufficient rain could mean another devastating crop cycle for the cooperative. Given these harsh economic conditions, we are considering the start of some type of microindustry for the community.

'We urgently need funds to begin purchasing building materials for the third pavilion which we plan to begin as soon as possible.'

One proposal currently under discussion is a small roof tile enterprise.

Whatever develops we will let you know in our next update. o

One of the new houses in the Arenal community.



You Are Needed

The work is development.
The goal is peace.

The Alliance seeks the collaboration of concerned persons and groups dedicated to grounding peace in the world through the growth and development of people.

Our People to People programs give the very poor family a chance to work and produce a better life for themselves.

You and Peace

Our Peace to People appeal is an invitation to work together with those who want your help. It is an opportunity to become involved in a meaningful effort, to become knowledgeable about complex issues that affect our hemisphere and to become committed with many others in the peace process.

The gift is yours to give.

In turn, it will return to you.

Peace To You

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