



Great Advancement for Development

Nicaraguan political and economic conditions are in turmoil. The ordinary family has a day-to-day struggle to survive during this critical time. The long-term goals of sustainability and enlightened leadership needs the basic resources, strong management, sophisticated business systems, new technology and finance. The birthing process for the creation and growth of new programs in health, education, employment, and the formation of new organizational structures is on the way. The Alliance planning for the decade will be centered on its newly created Institute for Social and Economic Development, known by its Spanish acronym, INDESE.

The new Institute is a Nicaraguan non-profit development organization, which will plan and manage well-thought-out projects with emerging communities, neighborhoods, and grassroots organizations. The Institute will actively seek collaboration with international foundations and agencies to channel their development and new business resources into its counterpart groups, who will implement the projects for improved living and working conditions, and a better quality of life for their members and the community at large.

INDESE has been legally formed as a non-profit organization, which will soon be recognized by the National Assembly

and printed in the *Gaceta*, the official government publication. This represents a great advancement in our growth perspective for the decade and a good feeling of satisfaction after many months of difficult paperwork and negotiations.

The Institute will begin immediately to provide planning and staffing for a variety of programs in microenterprise, health, and agricultural production. Many projects that were completed during the past 10 years can be included in more comprehensive, integrated, and wholistic development programs now being designed for low-income families and marginalized communities. □

Run for Your Life!

By Don Schopfer

Margarita Lopez customarily enjoyed her daily evening swim in the ocean around 6:30 p.m. As she left her home and approached the beach, she noticed that it seemed unusually cool that evening in September; however, that wasn't going to keep her from enjoying the waters she had relished for so many years. When she entered the water, she felt the ground shake a little and thought to herself, "another tremor." This was not unusual for her as earth tremors are detected quite frequently in that part of the world.

Shortly afterwards she noticed that sea crabs began exiting the sea in great numbers, and this phenomenon inspired a bit of fear in her heart. She decided to cancel the rest of her evening swim because sea crabs were not among her favorite creatures, especially when they were nibbling at her toes. She returned to her beach house to continue with her other daily activities.

As she began to prepare supper for herself and her husband, who was retired after many years of successful



Wondering what will happen to them next

entrepreneurship, she noticed a loud noise that sounded like an airplane landing on their house. She looked out the window towards the sea, and at that moment, she cried, "Oh, run for your life, my love!" She and her husband ran to seek shelter in a more protected section of their home. What she saw was a 30-foot wall of water moving rapidly towards them, and within seconds, their home was engulfed in sea water. Since the Lopez's beach house was of sturdy

concrete construction, their home was not totally destroyed, and they escaped death by the sea; however, many of their neighbors were not as fortunate.

The community where they have their beach house is primarily made up of poor fishing families who live in little wooden structures with thatched roofs, which were no match for up to 40 tons per square meter of pressure crashing

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From Rags to Riches, the Innovative Solution

By Don Schopfer

Since 1990, Nicaragua has been ruled by a new government, which through privatization hopes to improve the drastically depressed national economy. The Alliance, in an attempt to collaborate with new government initiatives, has established a new microenterprise development program. The program will benefit primarily the agricultural sector of Nicaragua, which currently is dramatically underdeveloped. Adequate use of farm lands is very uncommon, and availability of hybrid seeds is virtually nonexistent. Agricultural technologies used by most small farmers have been passed down through the generations from the 19th century.

The Alliance microenterprise development plan will bring basic business education to those small farmers willing to participate in this new comprehensive program. In addition to basic business skills, a savings and loan system will be developed, which these farm families will utilize in developing their own sustainable economic activities; a

marketing system will be developed by uniting the forces of the individual microenterprises; and new alternatives will be introduced so farmers currently operating in a deficit will have opportunities to change their economic productivity, thus elevating their families' level of life.

Feasibility studies are now being conducted in an attempt to identify some of the alternatives that different farm families may realistically encounter with a reasonable guarantee of success. Strategically designed microenterprises will be developed and supported, which in turn will help create a new marketing system that is sure to be a big winner among many farm families and in turn have a significant impact on improving the national economy of Nicaragua.

This new innovative program is a long-term initiative, which without a doubt, will draw many oppressed families into an economic activity that will make a positive change in their lives forever. They will soon be able to actual-

ly pay for the school books their children need. They will be able to afford medical attention that has never been within their reach. They may even have the opportunity to travel to other areas of the country and witness for themselves that there is more than just the barren fields where they have barely survived for generations.

Many Nicaraguan farm families have now realized that there's no chance for growth if they're always asking someone else for something. They know that they must do it for themselves to really get somewhere in life. They know that they themselves must assume responsibilities that they have always feared. Through the Alliance microenterprise development programs, they know their opportunity for change has arrived. □

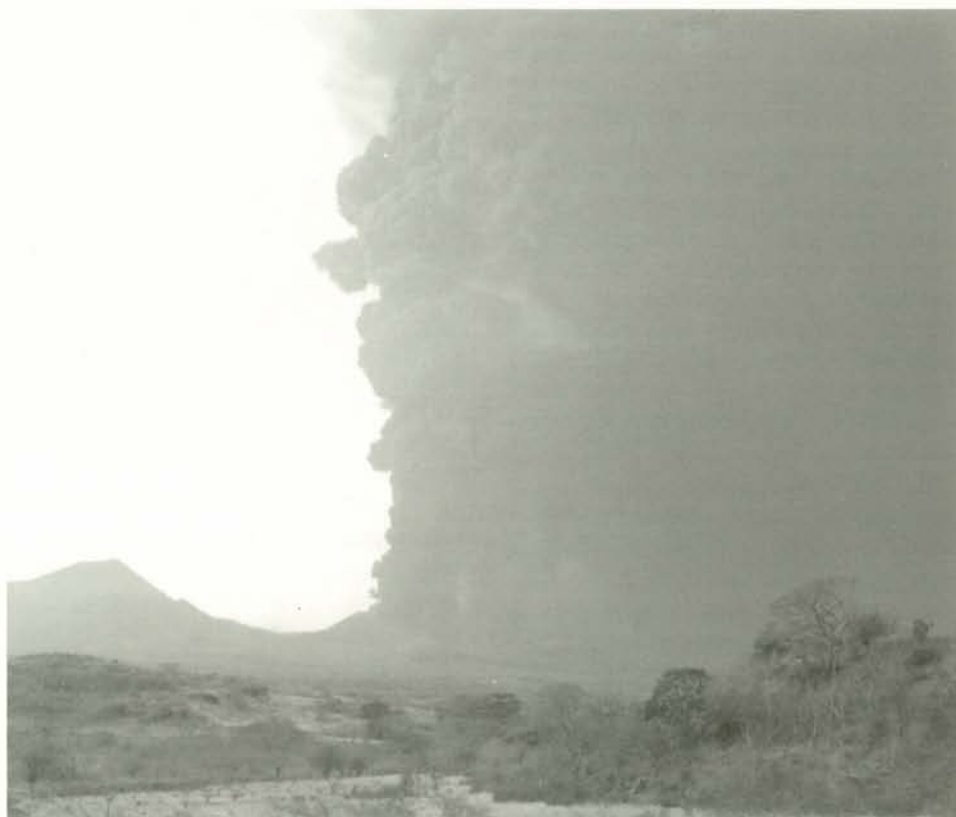
Please contact us if you wish to participate in this new initiative. A little help can make a substantial change in the life of an entire family or community.

Black Snow Storm Affects Thousands of Lives

Our pick-up was all gassed up and ready to go as we left our home in Managua and headed out to Leon, the second oldest city in Nicaragua. The weather was pleasantly warm and the sky was clear. As we drove along the south side of Lake Xolotlan (Lake Managua), we noticed a large dark cloud ahead and exclaimed, "What in the world could that be!" We drove on to investigate this interesting but eerie sight. We turned on the radio to see if there was any news and heard that the volcano Cerro Negro near Leon was erupting.

As we approached Leon the sky got darker and darker. The outskirts of the city were as dark as night. Shortly afterwards, the windshield wipers were turned on, for it was like an ice storm, only the ice was black and it didn't melt. As we drove on, the road became very slippery and it was like driving through four to five inches of black snow. It was in fact very fine black sand that was falling from the sky. The erupting volcano was spewing out large quantities of sand and creating a large black cloud, which then fell to the ground like sleet.

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Alliance Water Team Returns to Santa Cruz

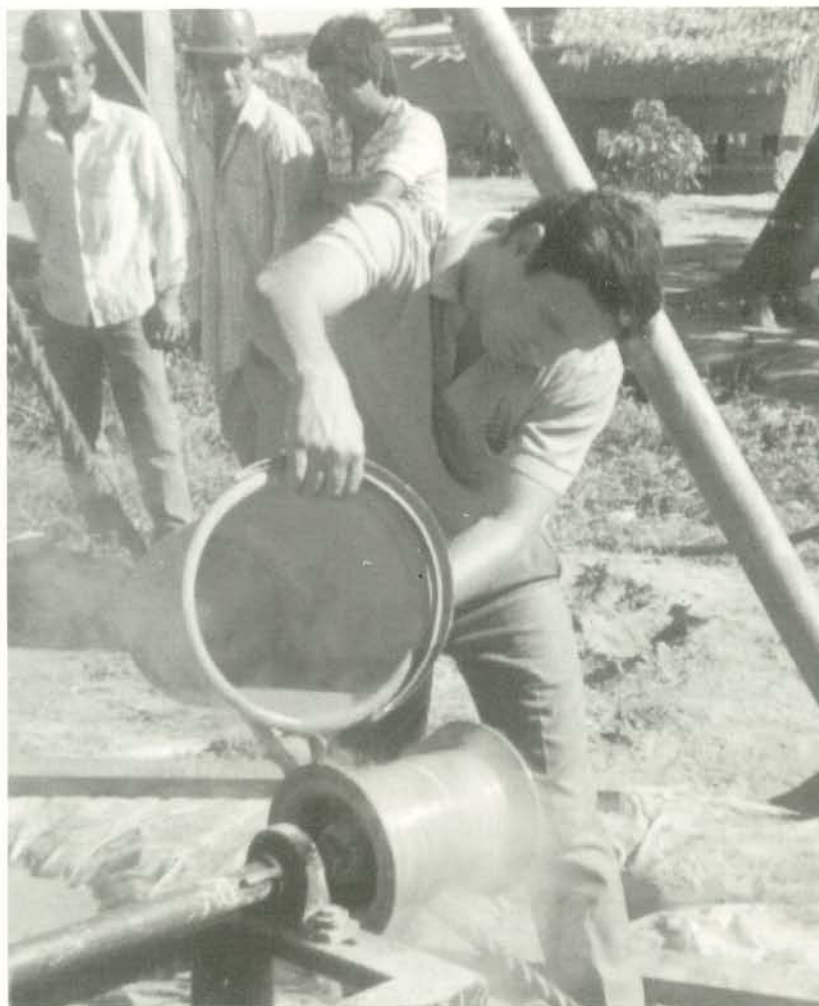
By Evelyn Dette

Members of the team, Jim Dette and Joe Di Bernardo, engineers, attended a meeting of the New Jersey Water Well Association (NJWWA) and described the Alliance's well drilling activities in Plan Tres Mil. They apprised the organization of the letter received from Engineer Juan Carlos Lopez, Director of the Well Drillers' Institute (PRODEA) at Santa Cruz, Bolivia, who cited the need for somewhat heavier equipment for denser soils encountered in outlying districts. Lopez has identified several graduates ready to advance their skills in operating this equipment.

The team was well-received by the NJWWA, and two rigs were offered: one a cable tool, and the other a trailer-mounted rotary. After inspecting the equipment, we found both sturdier than the small skid-mounted rig we had provided in May 1989. However, to determine which would be more suitable, Jim and Evelyn Dette, engineer and geologist, respectively, will be leaving for Santa Cruz sometime in November to assess which equipment should be sent down.

Once the rig is received, an Alliance team will travel to Santa Cruz and provide a two-week training program. The team will consist of a driller, driller's helper, engineer, geologist, and community development specialists. The program will consist of hands-on instruction in the operation of the equipment and an evaluation of the proposed drilling program. An alternate training program being considered would be to have an experienced well driller volunteer, recruited through an agency such as the Peace Corps or the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, for a term of two years to train candidates from the PRODEA in the techniques of rotary well drilling. The volunteer would reside in Santa Cruz and work directly for PRODEA under Engineer Lopez.

The Alliance will undertake to finance the management and coordination of the effort, including arrangement for shipping the rig and transportation of the team members. The Alliance will also provide the engineer and the geologist. An appeal will be made under the auspices of the Alliance to the



Cooling the mechanism is essential



Drilling for water is a long process

metropolitan NY/NJ well drilling community to raise the funds for the shipment of the equipment, travel, and subsistence of the team. The total cost

of the volunteer will be borne by the sending agency. □

Evelyn Dette is co-director of the Alliance water institute, Agua Pura.



Housing cooperative members building their own brick homes

Alliance Projects You Help to Support

How to do more with less? Where to give for justice's sake? Through grassroots building up of people is the reply.

Friends of the Alliance know the way. Many persons have helped the Alliance build the human space and nurturance for peace, cultural and economic development. Your donations go right to the Alliance's projects. The Alliance ranks in the highest category of public foundations in percentage of donations actually serving projects for low income families struggling to survive.

Your funds turn the corner for families, cooperatives, and

Health committee inspects renovations to health post



Paula sorts used clothing for thrift store





Mercedes leads youth music group



Farm workers irrigating crops and wishing for rain

small microenterprises that build communities of hope, the bedrock for sustainable grassroots civic culture we seek in our programs for the poor.

Even in hard times, over-consumption becomes a way of life for many. Yet others know the life of under-consumption and utter devastation of their own hopes and their children's dreams.

Natural catastrophe, social upheaval, sustained social disintegration due to poor health, inadequate shelter, little educa-

tion, and economic downside happens everywhere. But when one is already low to start with, the slide reaches the limit of minimal conditions of human dignity. Action by the more affluent is a demand of shared humanity.

In the details is our shared life; attention is the natural prayer of the soul.

The articles in this issue give details of Alliance projects that need funding in 1993:

Join us in this year's sharing! □

New rig probes deeper for community water well



Anastasia's bread baking helps support her family



University Evaluation Team Visits Alliance Health Project in Cusmapa

By Lori Kurtz

From January to May 1992, four graduate students from the American University Development Management Program in Washington, D.C., undertook work as a team of management consultants for the Alliance for Communities in Action. Their goal was to learn more about the management practices of a local non-governmental organization, and to provide assistance and recommendations for the expansion of the Alliance's development assistance programs. The specific focus of their task consisted of working with data from the village of San Jose de Cusmapa to determine how the Alliance could improve the health and nutrition conditions of the people.

During the course of the time spent working with Richard and Barbara Schopfer, the team split into two groups. One group, Aida Oliver and Patricia Mayorga, both Nicaraguans, was charged with analyzing and reporting on a health survey conducted by community health workers and midwives under the instruction of Vicente Baquedano, a nurse and program manager for the Alliance. The other group, Katherine Parkinson and Lori Kurtz, worked primarily on management issues.

One of the highlights of this collaboration was a trip to Nicaragua to

visit the village firsthand. Two members of the team, Katherine and Lori, traveled to Nicaragua during the second week of March. The trip was Katherine's second to the region; she had previously served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras. The goals of the trip were to visit San Jose de Cusmapa and address the issues of community health post projects, how to make them work better, participatory management of the health post/clinic, and to determine a strategy to foster community development. In addition, the team was to investigate the possibilities of establishing a self-sustaining "pharmacy" to meet medicine needs of the Cusmapa region.

Don Schopfer, Country Program Director in Nicaragua, arranged meetings with various ministry and university officials to discuss health-related issues, which currently are of prime importance. After a few days in Managua, Don and the two team members undertook the trip to San Jose de Cusmapa. Along the way the group made stops in Esteli and Somoto to meet with local Ministry of Health officials, study the use of herbal remedies, and visit health clinics and hospitals.

Upon arrival in San Jose de Cusmapa, the group was greeted by Vicente, who proceeded with a tour of the village.

San Jose de Cusmapa is an isolated village close to the Honduran border. The municipality comprises up to 18 different settlements. It is a study in contrasts; beautiful scenery as it sits atop a mountain, and yet the people themselves are poor and isolated from the basic necessities which we here in the U.S. take for granted. One of the highlights of the tour was the viewing of a newly-completed mural depicting the late Padre Fabretto, a Catholic priest and long time resident of San Jose de Cusmapa. Padre Fabretto was instrumental in constructing the road from Somoto to San Jose de Cusmapa. He was also well-known in Nicaragua for founding orphanages, caring for abandoned street boys, and other community services.

The people were hospitable and friendly. Vicente had arranged a meeting with the community health workers and midwives to take place in the local health clinic. A tour provided the team with a firsthand look at how a rural health clinic functions. While there was no doctor on hand at the time, the clinic was staffed with several trained nurses. The facilities were very clean, and medicines and health equipment properly stored. The team was particularly impressed by the efficient record-keeping

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Katherine Parkinson (left) and Lori Kurtz (far right) listen intently to Vicente Baquedano giving instructions to health care workers



Sister Parish: A Catalyst for Human Progress

Sister parish and sister city programs represent an important trend for the future in international exchange. A new approach to grassroots development for the poor is being studied and employed by some non-governmental organizations. This engagement is a direct working relationship of people-to-people groups with one another, one in the developed world and the other in the developing world.

Our sister parish program promotes

new relationships and solidarity among people of different cultures. For the past year, our parish working groups have been involved with counterpart groups in our Managua sister parish. The health team has sent eyeglasses and orthopedic devices, together with medical supplies and equipment to set up a parish health post in a very poor neighborhood. The social projects team has obtained a foundation grant that will renovate space for the clinic and youth study room. The

youth in our sister parish are engaged in music and art projects. An accomplished music group of 80 children performed recently and classes in oil painting have produced high quality pictures.

A visit by parish delegations and student exchanges are practical ways to promote understanding and solidarity as a means for the family of nations to solve global problems in the mutual pursuit for peace and development. □



Parish youth enjoy art classes



Our eyeglass project helps Romelia

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down on their lives. Preliminary estimates indicate that this phenomenal tidal wave smashed 200 miles of the Nicaraguan Pacific coastline and devastated the lives of thousands. More than 100 persons lost their lives instantly, of whom more than half were children under 5 years of age. More than 14,000 persons have been moved to refugee

camp, and international aid is being sought to help reconstruct the lives of thousands. Material damages have been assessed at more than \$1.5 billion.

Margarita said, "We were among the few lucky ones, but I can't imagine how the others will ever rebuild their lives." Antonio, Margarita's husband, added: "Most will probably abandon the coast and migrate to Managua; there's no

longer anything here for them." As I watched a tear fall from Margarita's cheek, she exclaimed, "We sincerely hope that you folks can help bring back an ounce of dignity into the lives of these poor families who now see no hope for their children who did survive this catastrophe." □

Don Schopfer is Alliance Country Program Director in Nicaragua

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In the city itself, people were on top of their homes sweeping the sand off the roofs to prevent the structures from caving in. Most had wet handkerchiefs covering their faces to keep from inhaling the fine sand. Some structures had already fallen to the ground from the tremendous weight of the sand. As we left the city and drove to the north side of the volcano, we could see the eruption clearly. The black stream of sand and ash being emitted from the volcano

reached an altitude of 3,000 feet, and was being carried by the wind towards Leon. There was periodic thunder and lightning over the mouth of the volcano, which looked like a fireworks display.

The volcano erupted for eight days, and the tremendous black cloud reached an altitude of approximately 25,000 feet. Authorities in Panama City claimed that effects of the eruption were felt in Panama, which is more than 500 miles from Cerro Negro. When the eruption

had stopped, approximately 500,000 tons of sand was spread over the region.

Today many Nicaraguans affected by the eruption are still trying to rebuild their lives. Seeking materials to rebuild their homes, looking for new plots of land so their cattle can graze and crops can be replanted, and searching alternative water sources that are not contaminated, are just a few of the tasks the people need to overcome for their everyday survival. □

Near and Available

As I read through newsletters I receive from international non-governmental organizations, I look for the personal:

* Are the people in the field and at the coordinating center in touch with the on-the-ground scene?

* Does the program develop ongoing oversight, and do the results lead to a change where personal lives are enhanced?

* Do more people benefit in real-life ways than the target population in a technical sense would indicate?

* Does the ratio of donated dollars favor the beneficiaries by more than 9 to 1?

By John Lawrence Daly

* Does one get the sense, in meeting the people running the operations in the country aided and the donor country, that people come first?

As a director of the Alliance with intimate knowledge of the workings of the Alliance, I can affirm "yes" to all these questions.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you too know the Alliance experience as neither remote nor inaccessible. Much to the contrary: The Alliance's mark is near and available to those with whom we share our lives. □

Mr. Daly is a member of the Alliance Board of Directors



Don Schopfer presents award to health workers in San José de Cusmapa

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systems in place. For each new baby brought to the clinic, a chart is prepared in order to mark progress and visits to the clinic.

The meeting of the community health workers was most interesting. Each member of the group introduced him/herself, and a lively discussion ensued during which the health worker's concerns were addressed. The team was able to ask questions about the conducting of surveys, training for health care workers, and clinic and general health practices. Most notable was the obvious concern on the part of the health workers for the people of their community. San Jose de Cusmapa has a reputation in Nicaragua for coming together to overcome obstacles. This

spirit was communicated during the meeting.

The remainder of the visit was spent meeting with officials from health, education, and local government. Hospitality was provided by the family of Vicente, who prepared a traditional dinner of meat, rice, beans, and corn tortillas.

While the day-to-day concerns of the people are great, they are not insurmountable. The Alliance will have very rewarding work to conduct in this village for many years to come. □

Lori Kurtz, M.S., earned a degree in Development Management and works as a consultant for international development organizations

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The Alliance is a non-profit organization that links groups and individuals for self-help projects in economically disadvantaged communities primarily in Latin America. The Alliance assists these communities by securing funds and appropriate technology for projects in shelter housing, agriculture, potable water, health, cooperatives, and microenterprises.

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