

Nicaragua's Children of the Dump

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty



**An Ongoing Humanitarian
Effort of
Rotary International**

Who Are The Children Of The Dump?

In the late 1990's in Nicaragua, missionary Father Marco Dessy passed by the Chinandega city dump. Through the swarms of flies he could see the rotting food, discarded cardboard, crushed plastic containers, and broken bottles. He then noticed that roaming among the piles of steaming garbage, were starving dogs, horse, oxen.

Then, to his complete and utter horror, he saw dozens upon dozens of young children, pregnant mothers, and entire families, sifting through the heaps of refuse, desperately looking for something to eat and something to salvage. These were the ***"Children of the Dump"***.



Desperation and hopelessness overwhelm a boy at the Chinandega dump

The Cause

As a result of civil war from 1980 to 1990 and the 1987 economic crisis, Nicaragua's economy essentially collapsed. But even more devastating to its people was the 1998 Hurricane Mitch which caused catastrophic destruction, loss of life, and reinforced an already severe cycle of poverty. Over 850,000 Nicaraguans were devastated by the hurricane; 450,000 of those were children.

As the torrential rains and mud slides subsided, the death toll topped 9,000 and 65,000 people were ultimately left homeless.

With no help in sight and no hope for recovery, the Chinandega city dump quickly became a source for food for the hungry and for scraps to build shelters. Nearly 2,000 people took up residency just outside the dump in hopes of surviving as long as possible.



A family outside their "home" near the Chinandega dump

But substantial assistance never came and much of the affected population has remained without clean water, food, suitable housing, electricity, sanitation, employment, or education. They are caught in a vicious cycle of severe poverty.

How Can This Cycle Of Poverty Be Broken?

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This is the philosophy behind breaking the cycle of poverty for the "Children of the Dump".

The model addresses critical components such as food, water, health, sanitation, housing, education, vocation, and sustainability. The most important aspect is the principle of *a hand up*, not a hand out. Recipients of aide are required to participate in every aspect of the recovery process including building their own homes.



Homes being built by their future tenants at the fishing village of El Menco

Families are also provided with vegetable seeds, tools, fruit trees, and materials to build a chicken coop. One rooster, ten egg-laying hens and, in some cases, one pig are also donated. These micro farms, located next to each house, provide both food and income for the families.



An individual stand proudly in his thriving micro farm

A portion of each family's corn, beans, and one egg per day are sent to the schools to sustain food supplies for added to the functioning economy and self-sufficiency of the new villages.



Children at a Rotary School in Chinandega

Children are required to attend primary, secondary or vocational schooling. Their educational materials and one hot meal per day are provided free of cost.



Learning a trade at the Betania Vocational School in Chinandega

The goal is independence from aide within a two year period.
And the model is working!

What has been accomplished?

- Villages have been built, but more are desperately needed.
- Land has been secured, but water wells need to be dug.
- Schools are ready, but cannot open as there are no desks, paper, pencils, books or even funding for teachers.
- Hospitals have been developed, but even basic equipment is scarce, broken, or severely outdated.
- Health clinics have been opened, yet everyday supplies are quickly running out.
- Maternity half-way houses are full, though bed linens and cribs are in short supply.
- And although numerous “Children of the Dump” projects have been initiated, many have not yet achieved sustainability.



The November 2006 inauguration of the latest “Rotary Village”



Mothers to be at the Refugio Belen Home receive donations from Rotary



The 3-bed San Martin De Porres Dialysis Clinic in Chinandega

How Can You Help?

With persistent humanitarian aide, effort and through numerous projects, many Nicaraguan's have been able to break the cycle of poverty... thus there are far fewer children living on the dump, than when Father Dessy first stumbled upon it. But, there are still **children** who must resort to a life on the dump – simply to survive.



A nine-year-old boy helps support his family by collecting plastic bottles to be sold as scrap

PLEASE!

Won't you consider one of the many ways you might help break the cycle of poverty? The children of the dump will thank you for, literally, changing their lives!



Because of Rotary and other contributors, this little boy is no longer forced to live on the dump

Partners and Contributors

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