



March, 01, 2004

Greetings!

I am very excited to share with you the results of my most recent trip to Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

As you may recall, school starts in Latin America in February. In Costa Rica this year we put 121 children into school. This more than doubles the number from last year, which was 53. All of the children from last year have enrolled once again and are very excited to continue and one is now applying at a local University and we are working with him to make sure he gets the aid he needs to continue with his dream of becoming a journalist. The new 69 students were found in neighboring communities to our original location. They were pre-selected by mother/volunteer Roxcina and then we put them through our application process and I was able to meet each child and family. Luckily, with huge discounts for volume purchases and sufficient donations we were able to purchase the school materials needed for all. Roxcina will be monitoring and reporting on the progress of each child monthly.

For 6 years we have been working out of automobiles and friends homes. With the number of children we now have, we have decided that it is definitely time to start considering setting up an office/center where we can meet with the children, have activities, study sessions, store donated materials, and someday have volunteers come and teach English and perhaps computers skills. We need funds to do this and will be looking for donations as well as grants to realize the conception of this project. In May/June I will be returning to start investigating possibilities for both purchase/construction of a center and an interim center, which will probably be rented or borrowed.

Alex, our other key team member and volunteer went with me to Nicaragua to start investigating possibilities there. In Granada we found a wonderful organization that is working with street children from ages 13-18. They teach the children skills such as sewing, how to make crafts, to how to be a mechanic. They also work with the families of organ to try to re-integrate the children with the families and or work with psycholological and abusive issues that arise within the families. We are very interested in partnering with them to work with the younger children in these families to keep them in school. The situation in Nicaragua is much poorer than Costa Rica so keeping a child in school is even more difficult. We were able to go to 4 barrios located on the outskirts of Granada where they work and met some of the leaders of the barrios as well as some of the families. In May/June I will be returning to try to begin formulating a working partnership. I am excited about this be cause I think we will be able to utilize the

resources already there such as their center and possible share a staff member to help us select and track the children for our program.

Another possible project we are investigating in Nicaragua is to set up a co-op in one of the very poor barrios to fabricate uniforms for both the children in Costa Rica and Nicaragua and possibly to sell. This could create jobs for the very economically repressed Nicaraguans as well as help us save money and possibly even help us create funds for other school materials.

Overall I have to say I am very pleased by the growth and success of Empowerment International. I am feeling blessed by our very dedicated volunteers Alex and Roxcina and by our generous donors who believe in us and know that they are indeed making a difference with their donations.

As a side note, I must share with you that my last night in Costa Rica was one of the most touching I have ever had. I said good-bye to some of the alumni children and there were tears, hugs, laughter, and they showered me with flowers they picked. I drove off beaming and crying knowing that yes, we ARE making a difference. A very real difference! This is more than just putting children to school. They have a knowing now that we will be there for them and they know they are loved. I felt blessed to be a part of this.

Thank you.

Kathy Adams
Director and Founder
Empowerment International