



Lady Bug Homeschool Supplies

**'Building the Foundations of a Brighter
Future for the Children of Nicaragua'**

Construction of the Santa Rosa Pre-School Facility



February 2006

Santa Rosa Lady Bug Pre-school

About Nicaragua

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Historically, the country has faced a plethora of natural disasters¹ such as earthquakes, droughts, tsunamis, volcanoes and hurricanes, as well as internal and external political and economic setbacks.

Despite positive growth rates over the last eight years, poverty in Nicaragua remains pervasive and severe. Saddled with an enormous foreign debt, more Nicaraguans are defined as 'poor' today than in 1993. Almost half of the population lives in poverty, surviving on less than \$1 a day. Almost 80% of those defined as 'extremely poor' live in rural areas.

Compared to the privileges Canadians are accustomed to, the people of Nicaragua face human suffering and struggle on a daily basis. Despite this harsh reality, Plan staff and volunteers continue to find in the Nicaraguan people a spirit of hospitality and hope. Time and time again, the citizens of Nicaragua demonstrate their commitment to community life and improving the well-being of their children.

Santa Rosa, Nicaragua

Lady Bug Homeschool Supplies has generously committed to funding the **construction of a one-room pre-school facility in the community of Santa Rosas**, 6 km from the town of Somoto, in the Department of Madriz.

Located in the arid zone of the northern side of Nicaragua, this tiny rural community is home to 700 people, making up approximately 154 families. Most of the people in Santa Rosa are farmers, with small plots of land in the surrounding areas. The fruit and vegetables they harvest are primarily for subsistence, however, when yields are high the surplus is often sold at the Somoto markets.

With most livelihood activities dependant on agriculture, the people of Santa Rosa are highly vulnerable to poor weather conditions and natural disasters, leading to periodic food insecurities and long-term poverty.

Considered one of the poorest municipalities in the country, this region faces problems of unemployment, illiteracy, and infant and child malnutrition.



Fast Facts:

- Population: 5.3 million
- Life expectancy: 67 years
- Children comprise more than half of the population
- 45% of the population lives on less than \$1 a day
- Poverty affects school participation, with many families unable to afford the direct or hidden costs. Poverty also results in child labour, which affects more than 167,000 children and adolescents.
- 45% of all income goes to the richest 10% of the population, while only 14% goes to the poorest
- 1 in 26 children will not survive to celebrate their 5th birthday
- Only 65% of rural populations have access to adequate drinking water
- 49% of rural populations lack access to adequate sanitation
- On average, adults have 4.6 years of schooling**
- An estimated 79% of primary-school-age children are enrolled. Approximately 30% them will not complete grade five**
- It takes an average of 10.3 years to complete the mandatory six years of schooling**
- The United Nations ranks Nicaragua as 112 out of 177 countries, based on quality of life standards



¹ Between 1990-2001, the country suffered three earthquakes, one tsunami, two major volcanic eruptions and several droughts. All of these events put severe strains on the country's emergency-response and health systems, as well as the overall economy.



The Importance of Pre-school

Education is key to ending poverty. An **education gives people the power to transform their lives**, and yet so many children in Nicaragua are deprived of this basic right.

Without an education, the cycle of poverty is almost inescapable: it is usually poverty and lack of resources that keep children out of school. Inevitably, people who grow up without an education have little hope of building a better future for themselves or giving their own children the opportunity to go to school. Those children who are lucky enough to

attend school often find themselves in overcrowded, uncomfortable and inadequate learning environments.

The early years of a child's learning are critical - making a significant difference to the way they develop and go on to learn throughout their lives. These years are pivotal in the development of a child's ability to learn, to create, to communicate, to trust, and to develop positive self-esteem.

A child's experiences in the early years – good or bad – lay the foundation for all that comes later.

Quality pre-school education provides an important basis of all future development. Children develop understanding in many different ways, but they learn best in an environment where they feel safe, secure, and assured. In general, boys and girls who receive adequate pre-school education have greater cognitive skills, are more expressive and communicative, and demonstrate a higher degree of creativity. Early preparation also increases the likelihood that children will remain in school, at least through the all-important primary education cycle.

Currently, the vast majority of Nicaraguan children are denied the benefits pre-school has to offer. Pre-school education has the lowest coverage rate of the entire educational system. An alarming 72% of pre-school-aged children have no access to educational services of any kind. Of the small percentage of children actually entering pre-school, most are from middle and upper income families residing in urban areas – reflecting deep-seated inequities most rural children face.

The Nicaraguan Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports simply does not have sufficient resources to address this problem. Faced with providing education services to an overwhelming population of over 2.2 million school-aged children,² the government is able to designate only 1% of an already restricted education budget towards pre-school education.

By supporting the constructions of a pre-school, Lady Bug Homeschool Supplies is helping the children of Santa Rosa overcome adversity and reach their potential.



² Nicaragua has the youngest population in Latin America, with an average age of 22 years. 53% of the population is under the age of 18.

Community Participation

Plan believes that local people and communities should actively participate in development processes. Local involvement remains a continuous process throughout the project cycle in activities such as needs assessments, technical design, planning, implementation, monitoring and management. From planning and research to construction and maintenance, the community members will play a major role in the project's success. Through this process of consultation and cooperation, the community is empowered and long-term sustainability is ensured.

The people of Santa Rosa clearly recognize the importance of pre-school. The community has already made admirable attempts to meet this need. Two informal pre-schools have been established; one working out of a 'feeding center' for undernourished children, the other out of someone's home. While these facilities provide an excellent makeshift solution, the pre-schools are less than ideal. The centres are overcrowded and are separate (both physically and scholastically) from the local primary school.

A community analysis has already been completed, showing that the need for a pre-school is urgent and growing. The community has coordinated with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to secure an early childhood education teacher and land for the construction of a pre-school room attached to Santa Rosa's existing primary school. By partnering with the primary school, the pre-school will benefit from shared resources and a more strategic curriculum.

Plan Nicaragua will continue to work hand in hand with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education, community leaders, teachers, parents and children in order to bring about a lasting change to the children of Santa Rosas.

Project Budget

Description	Cost to Plan
Land (valued at \$1155 - provided by the community)	\$0.00
Pre-school room construction	\$14,433.00
Equipment for the pre-school	\$577.00
Total	\$15,010.00

The local government and community will contribute the land, the teachers' salaries, pre-school maintenance and upkeep, as well as some in-kind labour and materials during construction.

The Difference You Make

There can be no doubt that the quality of a child's classroom environment has a direct and significant impact on his or her ability to learn. Your gift will build the official Santa Rosa Pre-school, providing pupils with well-lit, properly ventilated, child-friendly, safe and comfortable surroundings in which to learn and prosper.

This pre-school will improve educational success at all levels, and will provide children in Santa Rosa with increased opportunity, confidence and potential. The entire community will benefit from the education of their youth, resulting in a brighter, more hopeful future for all.

On behalf of all of the children, thank you. Your kindness and generosity opens the door to a world of possibilities.

