

# REPORT FROM THE FIELD

PEACEWORKS' JANUARY  
AND FEBRUARY 2026  
DELEGATIONS TO NICARAGUA

*Delegation members  
explore Jinotega's  
Kilimanjaro Reserve on  
horseback*



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Dear friends,

Leaving the United States for Nicaragua earlier this year, our 2026 PeaceWorks delegations left behind the heartbreaking chaos of violent ICE surges, military extraction of perceived enemies and the rising cost of just about everything.

We arrived with suitcases stuffed with art materials, beauty supplies, kids' books, puzzles and even solar panels and rechargeable flashlights sent by the PeaceWorks community. We also arrived with your financial donations that are now hard at work in communities throughout Nicaragua.

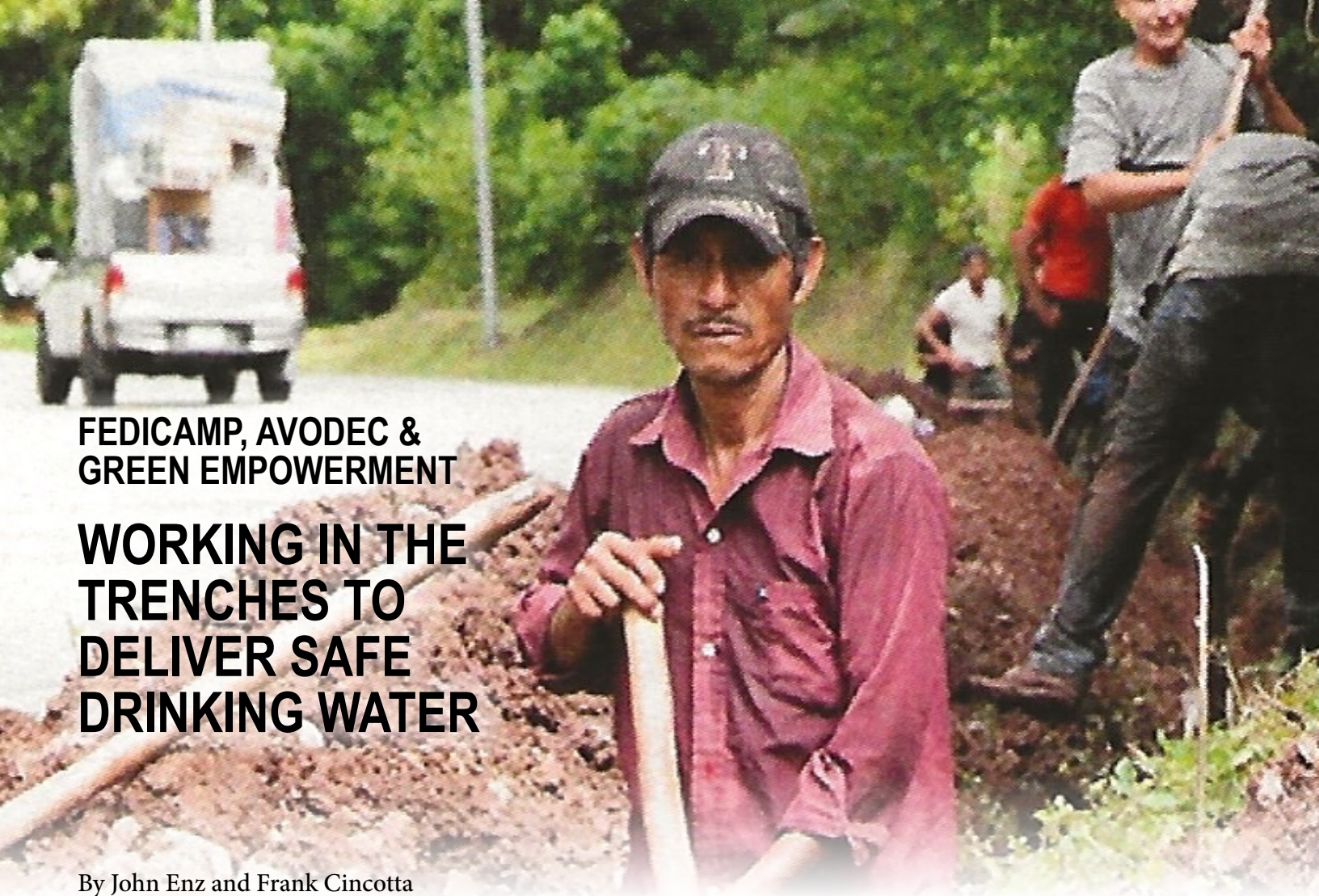
Traveling freely throughout Nicaragua, it was the ground-up nature of the projects that impressed us most. We saw community members making decisions about their own community development. To no one's surprise two more partner organizations now have women directors - FEDICAMP & CacaoNica. The revolutionary spirit in Nicaragua persists after all these years.

In this "Report from the Field" we are proud to share with you the achievements, challenges and the work we hope to achieve in 2026. We are so grateful for your support and solidarity with the people of Nicaragua.

Diane Sterner  
PeaceWorks President  
and Delegation Leader

February 2026 PeaceWorks Delegation  
on location above Granada, Nicaragua.

*From left: Don Preziosi Diane Sterner,  
Frank Cincotta, John Enz, Elaine Kirsch  
and Newly Preziosi.*



## FEDICAMP, AVODEC & GREEN EMPOWERMENT

# WORKING IN THE TRENCHES TO DELIVER SAFE DRINKING WATER

By John Enz and Frank Cincotta

Traveling into Nicaragua’s Segovia Mountains, we saw up close how the PeaceWorks community builds lives of dignity. But observing this work on the ground is not easy! It is physically difficult, mentally challenging and, in some cases, politically fraught.

Thankfully, ‘Maria from Green Empowerment arranged for our stay at a farm in Jinotega where we met with representatives from FEDICAMP, AVODEC and new partner CacaoNica.

A recent accomplishment reported by FEDICAMP was the completion of a new potable water system in the remote communities of El Paraisito and La Palestina. FEDICAMP and AVODEC have decades of experience protecting watersheds, promoting sustainable agriculture, providing access to drinking water and improved sanitation. They also empower local communities to govern and troubleshoot projects on their own, long after the technical advisers have left.

We learned that “getting in the trenches” to get a water project done has a wider meaning.

Before the first shovel hit the ground at El Paraisito, they discovered that residents of neighboring La Palestina were also in desperate need of a new water system.

Logically, the two communities would work together to build a shared solution, but there were hurdles to overcome. Folks in Paraisito didn’t want to cooperate because of old disagreements and misunderstandings with the folks in Palestina. And neither community had the resources to move forward on its own. The technical

experts from Green Empowerment and FEDICAMP feared the project was dead in the water, but they didn’t give up.



*Women had to carry water long distances before this project was built.*



They got a few members of each community to begin working together in guarded collaboration. Some trust was built, then they began digging trenches, laying down pipe and installing the water tanks. By the time the system was installed, not only was water flowing, but also a spirit of peace, friendship and the joy of working together was flowing between communities. We saw the essence of PeaceWorks' people-to-people mission in action.

This is just one example. This year, FEDICAMP is embarking on a new water project in the community of Santa Ana, Pueblo Nuevo that will benefit 80 families. At the same time, AVODEC, is finishing up a potable water project at La Pavona Central that will serve eight communities, representing 540 families and 2100 people!

And there is still so much work to be done! Forty other rural Nicaraguan communities are on the waiting list to start new water and sanitation projects.

In fact, PeaceWorks is now raising \$20,000 to go back to Los Corozales with AVODEC to bring latrines and wash basins to the entire community.

*An example of the new latrines AVODEC plans to install in Los Corozales. Below - Women from Paraisito and La Palestina carry the water tank for their new system together.*



Photo highlights from our visit with the Mariposa Spanish School and the Chispa de Vida Program for Kids with Disabilities.



# LA MARIPOSA SPANISH SCHOOL AND CHISPA DE VIDA

## Not Just a Spanish School

By Elaine Kirsh

At a first glance, La Mariposa is a Spanish school with intensive one to one tutoring and homestays. But after a few minutes with La Mariposa Director, Paulette Goudge, you learn that it's a whole lot more.

Paulette and her staff rescue animals, lead reforestation projects, raise food organically and assist families with improving their homes. Paulette's daughter, Guillermina, took us on a whirlwind tour of the classrooms, ecolodge rooms, and animal rescue area, topped off with a wonderful organic vegetarian lunch with Paulette and her staff.

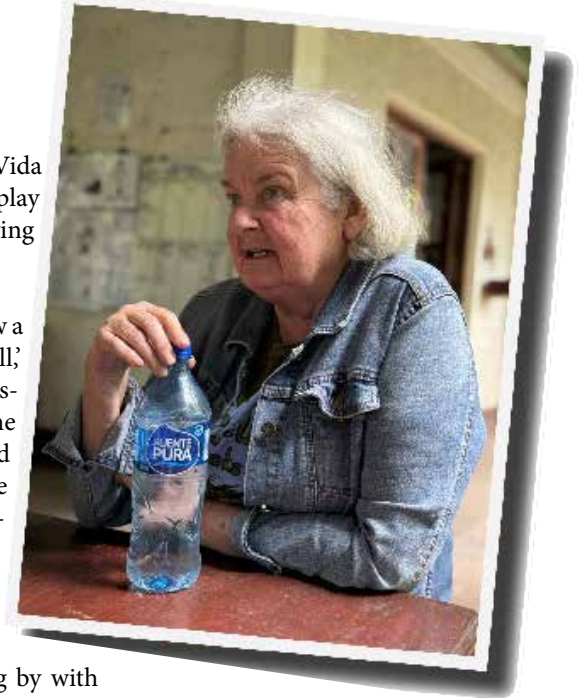
Later, we visited the *Chispa de Vida* (Spark of Life) program. PeaceWorks has been supporting this program for local children with physical and neurological disabilities, but we had not yet seen the new therapeutic playground. Built in honor of Julia Castro,

the former head of Chispa de Vida who passed away a year ago, the play area was filled with happy, thriving children.

I even got to participate when I saw a young girl balancing on a 'bosu ball,' a common physical therapy accessory. When I asked the girl if she could walk on the ball and showed her what I meant, it turned out she could indeed walk on it. The therapist appreciated the suggestion and asked if I wanted to volunteer. Maybe next time I visit!

We learned that Chispa is getting by with one physical therapist. Serving 50 children and a few adults – one practitioner is not nearly enough for such demanding, time-intensive work. But that is why Peace-

Paulette Goudge, Director of the Mariposa Spanish School



Works returns year after year – to understand the needs of our partners and plan how we can help.

**PEACEWORKS FEBRUARY  
2026 DELEGATION  
TO NICARAGUA**  
February 14-27<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**AVODEC  
EXPANDED PROJECT  
AT LOS COROZALES:  
\$20K NEEDED**

**FEDICAMP  
NEW SANTA ANA  
WATER PROJECT:  
\$18K RAISED,  
\$2K NEEDED**

**JUAN VENADO SEA  
TURTLE SANCTUARY  
2025: \$3K**

**EL PORVENIR  
COFFEE CO-OP  
2025: \$3.5K**

# NICARAGUA



**INHIJAMBIA PROGRAM  
FOR STREET KIDS  
2025: \$81K**

DEV

**MARIPOSA  
SAN JUAN I  
2**

**CACAO NICA**  
**SOLAR PANELS AND**  
**LATRINES FOR 40 FAMILIES**  
**2025: \$5K**

**AVODEC**  
**PAVONA CENTRAL**  
**WATER PROJECT**  
**2025: \$20.5K**

**FEDICAMP:**  
**PARAISITO & PALESTINA**  
**POTABLE WATER**  
**PROJECT**  
**2025: \$18.75K**

**RURAL WOMEN'S**  
**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**  
**2025: \$17.8K**

**SPANISH SCHOOL,**  
**DE LA CONCEPCION**  
**2025: \$6K**

*PeaceWorks partner organization reps join the delegation on a hike to a high point overlooking Reserva Kilimanjaro.*

A man in a white tank top is pouring coffee beans from a large red bag into a wooden tray. The tray is filled with green coffee beans. The background is a dark, rustic interior with wooden beams. A sign on the wall reads "ALTO PELIGRO".

# EL PORVENIR COFFEE CO-OP DEDICATED TO GROWING GREAT COFFEE

By Don Preziosi

Everyone at PeaceWorks has heard the stories of going up the mountain to the El Porvenir Coffee Co-op: standing on a makeshift trailer that is pulled by an ancient tractor, heading over inclines so steep that you think it may be safer to jump. We didn't do that this year. But Rene, the president of the co-op, made the trek down to visit with us at our hotel at Las Penitas beach.

Rene gave us a thorough report on the status of the co-op, which now includes 53 families, with about six families on leave while they try to earn extra income elsewhere.

As with any coffee growers, there are two yearly concerns that are beyond their control: the weather, which of course impacts total production, and the changing world coffee market which determines competitive selling prices.

The good news or the bad news?

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Ok, the good news first. Production was up about 10% from last year. They were also able to get \$4 per pound for the beans. However, the bad news is that this year they only got \$3.40 because of local taxes (\$3,800) and new 18% U.S. tariffs. Both taxes cut into Porvenir's gross sales in order for their US-based coffee roasters, Building New Hope, to sell at a competitive, premium coffee price.

Rene was also worried because Building New Hope had not yet committed to buying this year's harvest. The co-op needed to think of alternative ways to market their coffee. While they have considered experimenting with roasting some of their coffee and marketing it to better coffee shops around Nicaragua, there are challenges. Even a small roaster costs more than \$2,000, and there would be costs for packaging, distribution, and marketing-- a daunting task for the co-op.

Besides selling this amazing coffee at our events, Last year, PeaceWorks (with the Quixote Center) provided \$2,500 to set up an interest-bearing revolving fund to help pay for harvest-related costs while proceeds from sales are processed. With last year's interest payments, the fund has grown to \$3,100 to support next year's harvest.

We are lucky that Porvenir continues to produce high quality, organically grown, bird-friendly, fair-traded, sustainable mountain coffee. If you've already tasted it, you know how good it is. If you haven't, come to any PeaceWorks event – we serve it every time. Or look up Building New Hope Coffee on the web and order some. You won't be disappointed!

Update: Rene called to say that Building New Hope has committed to buy this year's harvest.

# JUAN VENADO SEA TURTLE SANCTUARY

## Sea Turtle Preservation

By Elaine Kirsh

In many parts of the world, sea turtle eggs are a source of income and food for impoverished coastal communities. If projects like the Juan Venado Sea Turtle Sanctuary on Nicaragua's Pacific coast didn't exist, there would be far fewer sea turtles left in the world.

Marvin Hernandez, coordinator of the project, met us near Las Peñitas beach. Marvin's team pays local people to bring sea turtle eggs to the sanctuary to hatch, instead of selling them for food. We were fortunate to arrive during the peak turtle nesting season from September to February. Most of the eggs brought in are from Olive Ridley turtles, but they also hatch some Leatherback, Green and Hawksbill turtle eggs.

Before taking us on a beautiful boat ride through mangrove forests at the Juan Venado Nature Reserve, Marvin showed us the bags of beach sand they use as nests. He dug into one to show us five baby Olive ridley turtles ready to be hatched and released.

We walked down to the beach and watched as the five babies made their way to their new home in the ocean. Later Marvin released 25 more. But that was only a drop in their bucket: over this past year, 153 nests were rescued representing 11,036 eggs. 10,484 turtles hatched and were released.



# INHIJAMBIA PROGRAM FOR STREEK KIDS 17 YEARS LATER

By Newly Preziosi

My husband Don and I first visited Inhijambia in 2009 on our first PeaceWorks delegation. Seventeen years later, in spite of the huge challenges of running a non-profit in turbulent times, we found Inhijambia with the same spirit and determination to help children that we had encountered all those years ago.

Inhijambia was founded 26 years ago by Mirna Sanchez with the goal of helping children around Managua's Eastern Market who were vulnerable to sexual exploitation, physical abuse and drug addiction. Thankfully, Mirna met PeaceWorks' founder Jim Burchell about that time and together, each working their skills across borders, created a program



Mirna Sanchez founded the Asociación Inhijambia 26 years ago.



*Inhijambia has focused much of its work with children and families who live in a large area in and around Managua's Eastern Market.*

that has transformed the lives of hundreds of children, now adults living happy, productive lives.

When Don and I visited years ago, a chart on the wall showed PeaceWorks as one of 17 funders. Now, following all the political unrest, in recent years there are only three. PeaceWorks support is more vital than ever and we saw that for ourselves.

At the “Jim Burchell House,” which is the home of Inhijambia’s boys’ education program, they’re offering new programming, including psychological support. We even saw one of the many jobs-ready training classes: the boys were learning to cut hair – a skill that can bring much needed income for years to come.

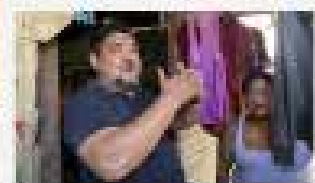
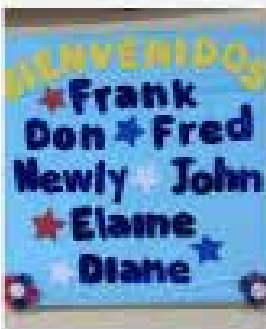
Over at the girls’ house we caught up with Blanca, the girls’ professional dance instructor who has the girls performing the most exquisite dances we’ve seen. We were treated to a beautiful performance by the girls’ music program and we also visited the classroom of the youngest girls who come for a daily breakfast, homework help, and play time.

Later we headed out to Matearé, a small community about a 45 minute ride outside of Managua where PeaceWorks helped build homes for former Inhijambia students. That’s where we caught up with Ingrid.

Don and I remembered Ingrid from 2009 when she was just a kid. Back then she bravely shared her painful testimony about growing up in Managua’s Eastern Market. And now here she was, 32 years old, strong and beautiful, telling us about her work teaching English, and the enormous happiness her daughters bring to her life.

Leaving Mateare, we couldn’t help but notice how the trees have also grown since the first houses were built. The trees are bigger and stronger now, providing much needed protection from the hot Nicaragua sun. As Inhijambia continues to grow, with all of us at PeaceWorks by their side, we can’t wait to see how, under the shade of their work and love, the next generation will bloom.

*Highlights from our visit with Inhijambia: children receiving educational support, learning job-ready skills and participating in cultural activities. Also, photos from the Eastern Market dump where many of Inhijambia’s families live, as well as one of nine new homes Inhijambia has built for families in Mateare, near Managua.*



## INHJAMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

# A Nicaraguan Homecoming

By Ellen Walsh

After years of emails, letters and Zooms there they were: the amazing young people that we've sponsored through the PeaceWorks university scholarship program. For us, traveling down to Nicaragua, it was like a homecoming weekend to see our kids at school!

Ten current and former recipients joined us to share a meal and celebrate our long-standing friendship. Delegation member Skip Winter caught up with Jordy who's sponsored by Skip's church, First Presbyterian in Cranford. Skip also saw Melissa who he has personal-

ly helped over the years. June and Paul Brown met up with nursing student Catarina and I was reunited with Lissy who has completed four years of medical school with just two years remaining until graduation.

There was only one cloud hanging over us, especially the students: in the last second Jerry McKenna was unable to travel down. Jerry and his family founded the schol-

arship program over 10 years ago and he would have been very proud to greet some of the more than 40 scholarship recipients he'd made possible over the years.



## CACAO NICA

# From Tree to Table

By Fred Schick

The CacaoNica project grows the good stuff: organic, fair trade, Rainforest Alliance-certified chocolate that you see in the fancy, high-end stores in Europe. The stuff that melts in your mouth.



But growing high quality cacao beans and getting them to market from the 42 rural, hard-to reach communities surrounding Waslala, Nicaragua is extremely challenging. The Quixote Center, together with PeaceWorks, has helped make this process more efficient, more sanitary and less costly with the installation of new solar panels and latrines at 40 growers' homes. I visited with three of the families.

Before the solar and latrine installations, these families used dirty gas lamps, had to pay to charge their phones outside their home, and in many cases didn't have even a latrine. Cell phones are critical in getting their prized cacao beans to market, while good latrines are

necessary to prevent crop contamination and meet organic standards.

Every 15 days or so, CacaoNica sends a truck to collect the newly grown beans, communicating by phone through WhatsApp. Coordinating the pickup is no easy task in such remote areas with few roads. With a charged phone, producers can manage their time more efficiently without missing a pickup.

In addition, there is now light after dark. Children don't have to study by candlelight. Families can listen to music or watch a video without worrying about losing power. and missing the next cacao pickup. And quality of life is much improved with the new latrines.