Nueva Vida, the resettlement community of 12,000 Hurricane Victims down the road from us, has changed dramatically in the last six months but still has a long way to go. We’ve been hard at work.

With the help of our four community promoters, Nueva Vida is slowly growing into a community. In May, with gifts from the Children Haven’s Fund (MN) and the Mennonite Central Committee (Nicaragua), we hired Juan Che, Juanito, Chico, and Danelia. These four people are incredibly diligent. They organize their Nueva Vida blocks and they hold block meetings in each Etapa (Stage, or neighborhood) for which they are responsible.

They also organize our health clinics, Nueva Vida’s health promoters, the building projects, and our food and clothing distributions. They know who needs what. They arrive in Nueva Vida at 8:00 AM and do not leave until 5:00 PM, walking its dirt roads, talking, listening, and organizing.

They also love the Nueva Vida folks. A boy fell on a large crochet hook. Juan Che helped him to the clinic. Our doctor couldn’t remove it safely, so he sent the boy to the hospital. Juan Che went with mama and boy because they were “his folk.” What would Nueva Vida do without these promoters?

125 provisional shelters sprang up to replace old black plastic lean-tos with the help of our volunteers. The Red Cross donated the materials (most of their materials came from US AID) which can be used to make wooden frame “houses” with corrugated zinc roofs, with “walls” and “doors” made by wrapping the wood framing in white plastic. Upon completion of the first 125, a dedication ceremony was held.

We’ve been trying, for almost five months, to get the materials for 275 more shelters. Hopefully as you read this, we’ll be hammering away. It’s disturbing to be building temporary shelters nine months after the hurricane, but that’s the way big organizations move.

US AID has been helpful in helping us get materials and they continue to help us help Nueva Vida. Hopefully, soon, we will have money in-hand to re-dig latrines in Etapa #1. The latrines were not dug or spaced properly when the original lots were distributed and are now are caving in or need re-spacing for health reasons. This will be a huge job.

For permanent housing, we have been working with the Rotarians here and with Rotary International to get the needed funds. These concrete block homes will replace the provisional shelters. We hope to begin our first 25 permanent homes in a month.
We opened a health clinic the 9th of August! After months of working with the Ministry of Health to get the needed go-aheads, we were offered a building the first week of August for a temporary place in Nueva Vida. So, in four days, we hired a doctor and staff, inventoried the medicines left to us by the owners of the building, set up a record-keeping system and patient policies, and began running a clinic by the seat of our pants!

At this writing, the clinic has been open for one week. All-in-all, it went very well. We share the tiny space with a women’s clinic (Si Mujeres), a dentist, and a pediatrician (who comes one morning a week). We fill most of the prescriptions for our doctor and for the other clinics, too.

We have lots of dreams for the clinic. One is to have a generator so the dentist can fill and clean teeth, not just pull them, and so we can open a small lab (the building has no electricity). The building is ours until the end of December (and maybe two months following.) We still need and are working on getting our own facility.

The ultimate hope for Nueva Vida is employment.

We are looking for funds to begin a Women’s Sewing Cooperative to sew organic cotton clothes (we have materials, machinery, know-how, and a market offered to us), businesses to make concrete block and concrete pre-fab slabs for all the construction going on, a processing plant for organic crops, and a nursery. We want to establish a community bank that would use the repayment of business loans to start more businesses. Our dreams are great, but we need you to help. Will you?

We hosted 21 individual volunteers this summer (plus a delegation of 23) who came to help! Volunteers stayed from one week to eight weeks. A few stayed in Managua and came here to work during the day, but most stayed with us in our home.

They put finishing touches on the Las Parcelas school to get it ready for its new teacher. In Nueva Vida they moved houses from one etapa to another as lots were re-spaced, built provisional shelters, held medical clinics, medically evaluated children, helped us open and run our new health center, and did a host of other jobs.

The volunteers not only helped the CDCA accomplish projects like the 125 provisional shelters, but they also helped us identify needs of individuals like Francisco, a two-year-old boy who weighed 13 1/2 pounds. Though they have returned home, they continue to help (two volunteers are committed to raising funds to get us a regular phone line, as opposed to our current cellular set-up, and one is working on the permanent health clinic facility).

It has been a busy summer!

The organic crops are slowly growing and recuperating some of last year’s loss due to Hurricane Mitch. The CDCA continues to work with over 2,000 small growers to market their crops. We’ve already shipped one shipment of sesame and honey this year. This should be a productive year (we said that last year!), but recently the volcanoes have been restless. Many sesame fields are near volcanoes, and the volcanoes are spewing up molten rock, rumbling, shaking the earth, opening new vents, etc.

We have contracted with a Cuban agronomist to train growers about peanut production (we have a buyer in-hand). Cuba has vast knowledge in organicics.

We are expanding into soy beans because it is a good rotation crop for the earth. We are also researching ways to help PRONIC, SA (the organic business) become independent of the CDCA, but we have a long haul to go yet on that.
Mike has been hobnobbing with all kinds of dignitaries as we work with big organizations like the International Red Cross, US AID, Rotary International, the Mayor’s office, and the Ministry of Health — (well, hobnobbing and beating his head against brick walls!). And speaking of brick walls, Kathy has been doing necessary government paperwork for our visas, bus papers, reports, etc.

Pat’s Women’s Support Group is still in full swing. Sarah continues to use her skills in begging discounts and freebies — now in Spanish.

Kathleen loved having her brother and nephew here in July. Coury, Daniel, and Joseph have loved having playmates (we also call them volunteers) and now they miss them as do we all. [And in the U.S.: Tiff is settled in Boston and Jessica is in her third year at Ithaca College.]

Please note our email address is now:
jhc@ns1.sdnnic.org.nl (with a #1 after the ns)

Needs:

Starting the clinic has really put a crunch in our budget. We have an additional $650/month in wages alone. We have no idea yet what our pharmacy medical needs will be. This starting week we’ve spent over $500 on medicines. So we need...

- medical donations
- donated medicines and equipment
- generator

Kathy and Pat are headed to the West Coast in October and November for a two month speaking tour. If you can help with a ...

- vehicle for any part of October and/or November, please email us or call 1-800-ASHEVIL and give Jim Brown your message for us.

This is the time to order ornaments for ...

- Angel Trees. These are trees (displays) set up in churches/groups/etc. with Nicaraguan hand-made ornaments on them. The ornaments are sold with the proceeds coming to the CDCA to help fund all our projects. Last year the Angel Trees brought in over $7,000. If you want to help, please mark and send in the attached form.

Yes! I want to help in some way to support the work of the Center for Development in Central America.

☐ Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $ ________________ .

(For a minimum gift of $25, you may request Grits, Greens, and Gallo Pinto, our unique and versatile cookbook. For a minimum gift of $50, a hand-thrown pottery mug especially designed for the CDCA; please specify right/left-handed mug handle.)

☐ Yes, please send me a cookbook. ☐ Yes, I would like a mug... ☐ Right-handed. ☐ Left-handed.

☐ Enclosed please find my tax-deductible gift, for Hurricane Reconstruction, of $ ____________________ .

☐ Please contact me about the Angel Tree project.

Please add me to your mailing list, or correct my address label as follows:
(Mail to CDCA, 2425 Spicewood Dr, Winston-Salem NC 27106-9768.)

Name and Address: ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

Phone / fax / email: __________________________________________________________
Reflection...

Let me introduce you to Maria, a resident of Etapa #1 (Stage 1) in Nueva Vida. She is 36 years old and a single mother of 10 children. (Her husband left three years ago for Costa Rica, looking for work, and there has been no word of him since. They don’t know if he abandoned them or died.)

Before she received one of our temporary shelters her family had to sleep in shifts because there was no room in their tiny thrown-together shack. Now she is extremely thankful for her white plastic 13’ x 15’ home.

Maria works hard. She works hard for her community. She is always out checking on folks, working with our promoters, and making sure people are doing what they can. She came over to the clinic the first morning at 5:00 AM to clean the clinic properly before it opened and stayed ‘til 6:00 PM cleaning, managing the crowd, and helping with this and that.

She is tiny. She is strong. She has a warm, willing smile. She has a twinkle. She’s soft-spoken and yet very out-spoken. She seems tireless and fearless ‘though I suppose there are nights when she holds her three-year-old and wonders how they will make it through the next day.

I wish you could all meet her, see her beauty, and listen to her say thank you. It would warm the cockles of your hearts.

Becca (Volunteer) and Maria

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