

The **Fair Trade Zone** (Women's Cooperative) seems to go through its ups and downs...now being one of its downs. They have a hard time getting things to fall together. Our two volunteers, both named Emily, are working with them. One is working on keeping track of inventory and product while the other helps answer emails and runs messages back and forth to them. One of their problems is that Yadira is home for maternity leave and Yadira tends to be the one who can keep on top of things a bit better (as you will see, maternity leave appears to be an issue for the CDCA for 2006).



Mike and one of the cooperative members, Ruth, went to Minneapolis 7-8 April, to talk to a Sweat Free Communities Conference. At the writing of this newsletter, Chris, our spinning plant consultant from the States; Angel, a Fair Trade member; Enrique, our own mechanic; and Mike are headed to Peru 26-30 April to visit a spinning plant and talk with cotton growers. Angel and Enrique will stay longer, spending three weeks in Peru training in the spinning plant. Although the spinning plant **money** is back on hold *again*. This is the way it goes with funders..."Okay it's settled, no wait! We have more questions."

CAFTA is in effect in three countries now: Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. The Fair Trade Zone has shipped their first container to the US duty-free through CAFTA. However, CAFTA regulations will allow them **no more** duty-free shipments this year! The public was led to believe that CAFTA's duty-free designations would help their markets whether the raw materials (like the cloth and yarn) come from another CAFTA country or a non-CAFTA country (e.g. Peru, where most of our organic yarn comes from). Instead, only a very small percentage of goods made from non-CAFTA origin raw materials are allowed to be exported duty-free. And not all businesses are even getting those small percentages; they're lucky to get any allowance. CAFTA makes a great sound bite, but the reality is not so good.

With CAFTA medicine prices will sky-rocket. The doctors and medical workers have been on strike since November 2005. The medical workers finally settled for less than they had wanted with pay-raises supposedly happening in June. Medical attention during the strike was a nightmare. Few people were treated. Chronic conditions got out of control, for example, leading to leg amputations that normally could have been prevented. People were so sick and no public hospital care was available except for extreme emergencies (people with money could and did get care). The strike was to demand that the salaries of the doctors (currently \$300/month) be raised to the minimum standard of other Central American countries (\$500/month). Officials said that the International Monetary Fund dictated that salaries could **not** be raised. The Nicaraguan doctors did not get the full amount, but they at



least got something.

This strike was painful for the doctors here. Our doctors, Jorge and Wilfredo, are committed to serving the poor and it broke their hearts. We helped out as we could by letting them write prescriptions and send folks to our clinic. Henry and Danelia, our support staff, served people admirably. Speaking of Danelia, she too is pregnant. We are advertising for a volunteer nurse to come during her pregnancy to help keep us functioning during her maternity leave. She has diabetes, so keep her in your thoughts.



The lobby and main area of our Clinic were painted by the Bucknell Brigade (Lewisburg, PA) in March and Engineers Without Borders (Cal Tech) are submitting funding requests to help the clinic with underground water storage and an incinerator. Engineers Without Borders gave us money to paint the sewing cooperative's roof with reflective paint to reduce the heat, drawings for building a sharps containment (needles, etc.) for the clinic, and drawings to help a cooperative keep a hand-dug well from caving in on them. They were busy. We hope



they will also use those huge brains to design an herb drying rack that keeps moisture and dust out.



EWB testing roof-cooling techniques



Another pregnancy to announce is Margarita's. She even came to us and asked when would be the best time for her to be gone in relation to delegations to plan her pregnancy...wasn't that amazingly thoughtful? All of these women are vital to the smooth running of our projects...their absence will be a new challenge for us.



COPROEXNIC, RL., our organic agricultural cooperative is still selling sesame and coffee although the rains are long gone. We are gathering and selling two containers of sesame. The coffee is already sold and shipped. Matt is still at the coffee cooperative teaching English until mid-May. Eric, our volunteer coordinator, joined him for the month of April.



JUBILEE HOUSE COMMUNITY
"You shall not oppress one another for I am the Lord your God." —Lev. 25:17

Rogelio, our construction manager, discovered today (20 April) that his brother committed suicide. Please keep him and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Coury (10th), **Daniel** (8th) and **Joseph** (5th) are finishing up school in June and are so looking forward to going to the States for visits there with their mom and dad.

Sarah is in the States now, speaking and visiting with her mom, who has Alzheimer's, and her children living in California. She is helping her sister with the task of cleaning out their parents' home.

Mike hates all this traveling around the globe but with Becca, as a new mother, there is no option. In our office we have baby stuff lying around...and sometimes baby, Eibhlín, when she is not in someone's arms. **Pat** has been taking on the tutoring of Joseph, who has ADHD...not an easy task. **Kathy** helps the kids in Spanish and French (as does Emily M., a volunteer). **Kathleen** has been knee-deep in science fair projects, something that brings out her "road language".

Reflection:

I can remember watching Sesame Street with Tiff and Jessica when they were little and watching Kermit telling us to turn off the water when brushing our teeth to save water. Water is going to be the next huge commodity...more than oil because we need it more.

We get water here sometime between midnight and 2:00 AM, and it goes off around 4:30 AM. We have storage tanks, but often if we have lots of volunteers using water they do not have the chance to refill. So we use less and less water and believe me it



photo: Eric Gruen



photo: Dietrich Gruen
scrubbing clothes & kids in limited water

makes jobs twice as hard! It also makes me mad... more than mad, rage-like. When we and the people around us struggle to maintain enough water, as I take the kids to school and bring them home, I see rich people in their rich neighborhoods watering their lawns in the middle of the day...or washing down the sidewalks with a hose.

This rage helps me understand what the poor must feel like to struggle and struggle just to barely survive while watching the rest of us squander and waste what is precious to them. It helps me on a real gut level to *begin* to understand the level of rage the poor must cope with day-in and day-out...and I wonder why they haven't killed us all. It is a real testimony to their – I don't know – hope, patience, helplessness, tiredness, or the wish that one day they too can waste...I don't know what it is. For me, watching that water wasted makes me crazy! And reflective...and gives me an understanding.

We know this water situation is going to get worse. The government... the makers of CAFTA... the international banks want the water to be privatized so they can sell it off to even more people who know how to waste it. Water is one of Nicaragua's most valuable commodities... it is also basic for human life. How... tell me... **HOW** can people in power sell out the people without power so cheaply and without conscience?

-Kathleen



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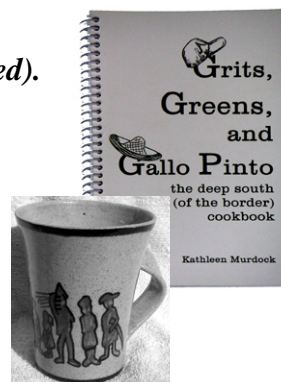
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