May 2015

Great news! The sesame processing plant has a new manager who is an engineer in food chemistry. The plant initially employed 75 people for four weeks working three shifts daily/7 days a week. Now it is operating 12 hours/day, 7 days/week with two teams. The plant is leased and operated by COPROEXNIC, the organic agriculture cooperative.

Since the beginning of January, the plant has processed 13 container loads of COPROEXNIC’s own organic sesame and one container of conventional. Now the plant is contract-processing the sesame of other agriculture businesses. This will help make the plant sustainable.

Together with COPROEXNIC we are exporting 13 containers of organic peanuts. We are also selling organic peanuts in-country. We vacuum pack the peanuts which allows us to sell the peanuts over a longer period of time.

One of the co-owners of Nuts to You, Sam, and their sales representative, Ann, came to talk to farmers, visit the sesame processing plant, introduce Ann to Nicaragua, and see how important their business is in making the lives of Nicaraguans better. Engaging buyers is the RIGHT way to do business and is a model for others.

El Porvenir, the organic coffee cooperative and member of COPROEXNIC, exported one container of their own coffee! They successfully solved the few problems with the quality of the coffee that they had last year.

Agora Partnerships chose the organic cotton project as one of 15 projects in all of Latin America to participate in their 2015 Accelerator Program. Their goal is to “accelerate entrepreneurs building a sustainable economy across the region.” Even though the 2014 organic cotton crop was a complete failure due to the drought last year… $108,000 and much labor were lost…

Becca and Mike have been working hard this year with Agora Partnerships. In March, Becca attended Angora’s week-long introduction conference that was held in Nicaragua. She and Mike have been meeting with a consultant and are learning about how to improve the business aspect of the cotton project and how to present it to social investors, which will happen in October in San Francisco… actually sitting down with people who have the means to invest. What they are learning will enhance our other projects as well.

Much of the energies of the staff have gone into researching and looking for money. Due to the cotton loss, updating the sesame plant infrastructure, and the unexpected delay of a working capital loan from ROOT Capital, the Vida Fund has just about maxed itself out with loans. Having more investors would mean a little breathing room for the farmers as well as the employees of the sesame processing plant, the members of COPROEXNIC, and the Board and staff of the CDCA.

We are helping to get water into one of the small rural communities with whom we have worked for years. The Metropolitano Rotary Club of León here in Nicaragua is donating the casing and the digging of a well… thank you very much!

We are providing all the local support and materials for the well drilling. Everyone in the community was excited… until… they dug 285 feet which is as far as their equipment could reach and hit stone… no water. They have capped the hole and
the community will have to wait another year until equipment that will go deeper is available. At least the very first steps are taken and maybe… maybe some miracle will happen so that sooner rather than later these families will have water.

The Health Clinic is receiving funding for a part-time ob/gyn for five years!!!! This is a need the Nueva Vida community identified several years ago. We will be interviewing candidates soon. We do have one résumé from a doctor trained in Cuba. She came to us last fall to see about a position because of our work with poor women.

Having an ob/gyn will mean we can:
• do See and Treat using cryotherapy, an outpatient procedure, to treat the beginning stages of cervical cancer… we have all the equipment we need;
• provide more consistent prenatal care, PAPs, and family planning;
• greatly expand our Women’s Health (which is much better than it was a year ago, but is still mostly a hit-or-miss service, because we greatly depend on volunteers); and
• free up time for our current doctors to provide other important services that they now allot for women’s services.

Even though we have not broken ground on the third clinic building, many posts and losetas (the concrete wall panels) have been made by many volunteers. The Spanish class from Lopez Island high school (WA) continued the work of tying the panels and posts, as did the March Bucknell Brigade (Lewisburg PA), and the Post Oak High School (Houston TX). In April the Unitarian Universalist Church of Haverhill (MA) began filling the forms for the posts and losetas with concrete. All of these groups have worked on a storage room being added onto the clinic’s second building to house crutches, wheelchairs, etc. in order to renovate the room currently being used for storage into a clean room for minor surgeries. We now have the funding for that renovation!

Volunteers are also expanding the porch of the second building and its roof to create more waiting area. A long overdue wheelchair ramp has been built connecting the first and second building.

In addition to doing construction, the groups spend time learning about Nicaragua, traveling to El Porvenir, the remote coffee cooperative, and touring to the sesame processing plant. At the El Porvenir cooperative Bucknell Brigade’s doctor and ob/gyn, Marion, attended women while Jorge, our radiologist, attended children. With our portable ultrasound he also checked women and men for tumors, hernias, and babies in utero. This was a first for the remote community.

In March we totaled 30 medical volunteers in our clinic… a record!

We had a small group from North Anderson Community Church - Presbyterian (SC) who helped us with a boring-but-needed job of writing legible patient numbers on files. A class of nursing students from Boston College treated patients both in the clinic and in their homes. One provided a week of women’s care before Marion arrived. Ending their week, the nurses taught our health promoters about several topics.

We had a nursing class from the University of North Carolina for a day-and-a-half. Their pharmacist helped us in the pharmacy, but most went into the community and saw patients in their homes like the BC
students. Abbe, a nurse with the Haverhill UUC delegation also made home visits to check blood pressure and glucose of home-bound patients.

After Marion’s week of service, Libby, a women’s care nurse practitioner took over. After Libby, the women’s care went back to our doctors… now you can understand about the hit and miss services with which our patients deal. With the funding for a part-time ob/gyn coming, we and the clinic staff are anxious to start providing consistent care!

In February our dental clinic staff and the students of Lopez Island went to the public preschool and primary school and did over 750 fluoride treatments! Also that month two dentists and their assistants from ORPHANetwork treated children and teens for 4 days. We continue to work closely with ORPHANetwork trying to provide dental care to the children of Nueva Vida.

We are grateful to have had Jolien, a student dietician, from Belgium for the last six months. She has developed trainings on breast feeding for our staff to use in the future. She also has worked with patients on diet related to diabetes and malnutrition.

Courtney, from Seattle, volunteers mostly in our public health component, aiding as well as learning from Jessenia, our Public Health Coordinator. They are working to develop support groups and services for HIV positive patients and asthma patients and their parents… because we have funding to get started with both!!!

Courtney’s Spanish skills have also been invaluable in facilitating the process for medical people to do home visits. These visits provide aid to patients who are home bound and help volunteers begin to understand what life is like for the poor.

JHCommunity: In February Kathy and Pat went to Florida to celebrate their mother Jill’s 90th birthday with her Friends Meeting.

The UUC of Haverhill brought gifts to us. The first gift was Sarah returning home with them from her successful - though exhausting - spring tour. Thanks to those of you who cared for her while she traveled. The second gift was our daughter, Jessica, and her two children, Elliot and Charlotte, coming as a part of the delegation.

Daniel, who is taking a year off from dental school, is doing a great job as our volunteer coordinator. Joseph jumps in and helps with delegations and other CDCA work as he waits for college in the fall.

The Community enjoyed having Paul Susman, professor at Bucknell, and his wife Libby Meadows the week after the Bucknell Brigade left. We enjoyed celebrating Paul’s 65th birthday. Libby provided immeasurable insights for Pat and Kathy regarding many medical concerns that arose after their mother fell. Pat has been in Florida with Jill for over a month and Kathy has been traveling back and forth. By the time many of you read this, Jill will be part of our Community in Nicaragua living with us in the Grandparent House that we built when Mike’s father lived with us long ago.

Reflection:

In the 1960s under the administration of U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, legislation was passed under the unofficial name “The War on Poverty.” President Johnson introduced this legislation during his State of the Union address in 1964.

The War on Poverty was to address the national poverty rate that was then around 19%. We hear very little about the War on Poverty, but we hear a great deal on class warfare from the pundits in the media. Who are
the victims of this war the pundits declare? The rich.

Now let’s regard the following facts about global wealth and global poverty - please read the next six facts slowly, and maybe two or three times:

1. The population of the world is more than 7.2 billion people and of our family of 7.2 billion people….

2. 3 billion people live in poverty… defined as living on $2.50 a day or less.ii

3. 1.3 billion people are desperately poor which means they live (or try to exist) on $1.25/day or less.ii

4. 80 of the richest people own more wealth than the poorest HALF of the world’s total population… meaning that 80 individuals own more wealth than over 3.5 BILLION of the world’s poorest people.iii

5. The richest 1% of the world’s population is about 72 million people (how many are 72 million people? 72 million = 23% of the U. S. population; or = about the population of Turkey). These few 72 million people now own 48% of the total world’s wealth… an increase of 4% in 5 years.iv

6. And who make up that top global one percent? Billionaires? Yes. Millionaires? Yes. AND anyone with an income over $34,000 after taxes which means that a family of four earning only $134,000 is part of that top global one percent… because, horrifyingly….

7. The global median income is a mere $1,225/year.ivi

The facts show that we no longer have a war on poverty, but we definitely have a war. Gandhi said “Poverty is worst form of violence.” The “haves” are waging an insidious, nefarious war on the poor. We who are part of the “haves” have to let go of our wealth and start standing up for the poor.

We “Haves” can no longer be silent and complacent about the reality that three billion people live on $2.50 a day. If we do, we are actively turning our backs on their suffering, anguish and deaths.

If we, the wealthier family members of our global brothers and sisters, do not hit a reset button that changes the ever-growing gap between us and the poor, if we stay silent, complacent and inactive, then we need not be surprised when those three billion people finally rise up and shout “ENOUGH!”

When that moment comes, may we – at least – know in our hearts that that cry will not be the start of the war… the war started long ago.

This Mother’s Day, if you would like to give to “One Mother to Another” to support mothers and infants in the New Mother’s Program, a project of the Health Clinic, please go on-line (http://jhc-cdca.org/helpMD.html) to make your donation and we will send notice of your gift to whom you designate.

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

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

Note: you can also give online via: https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/jhc-cdca

This Mother’s Day, I would like to give to “One Mother to Another”, to the Nueva Vida Clinic in honor of my mother, to help teenage young women. I am giving this gift of $____________ [ ] Check enclosed

PLEASE NOTE: In order for your mother to receive her gift card in a timely manner, please email her name and email address, and your name to: becca@jhc-cdca.org.

(See http://jhc-cdca.org/helpMD.html for more information.) I would like to receive an electronic newsletter instead of paper at this email address:______________________________

Mail to CDCA, c/o Peggy Murdock, 352 Carly Ln, Rock Hill, SC 29732-7750.

Please include your correct name and current address information from the newsletter label to avoid duplications!