

April 29th, 2023

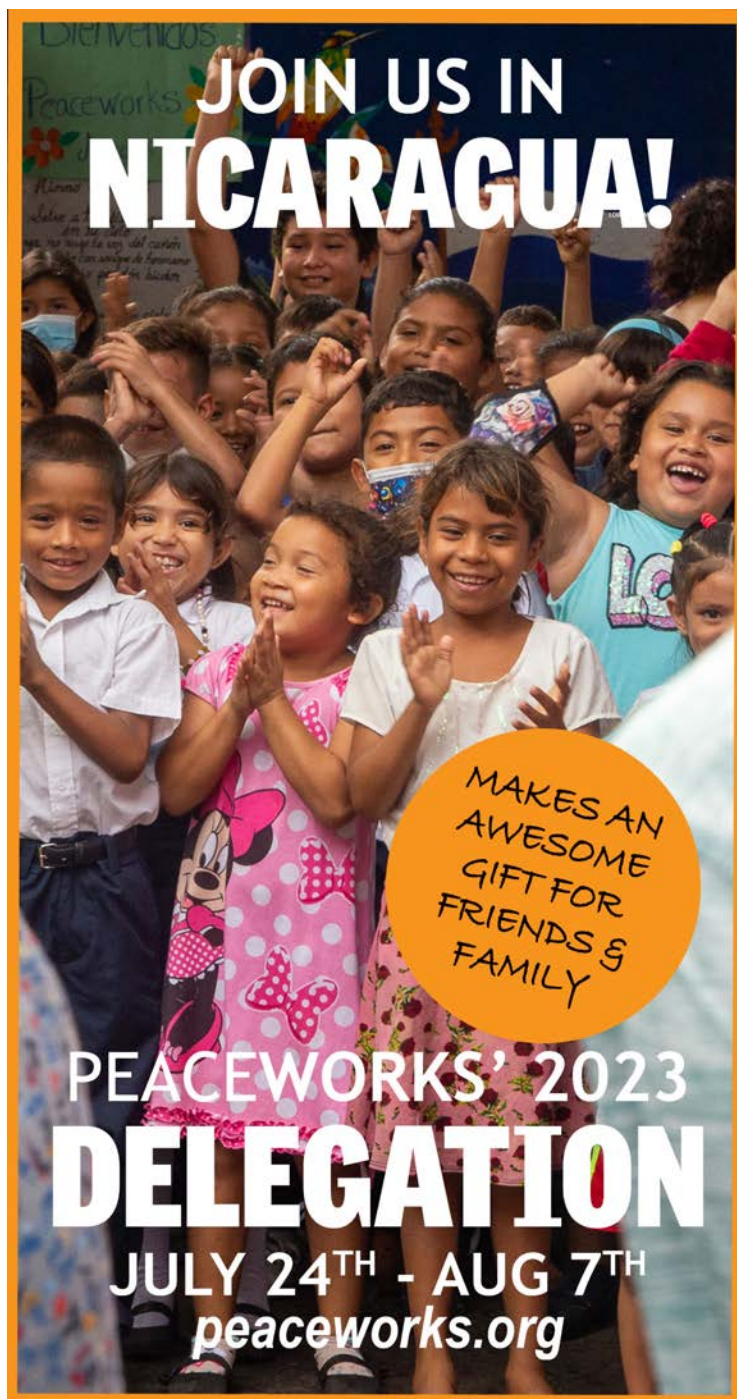
Dear friends

Last February, Nicaraguan lawmakers voted to guarantee women's rights. The government is backing this promise with a range of initiatives to support women's equality. But how are these programs and promises playing out in the daily lives of Nicaraguan women? According to our Nicaraguan partners, the answer is complicated.

**First the good news: Nicaraguan women in leadership**

According to the World Economic Forum (Davos), Nicaragua is one of only a handful of countries to have significantly closed its gender gap in a range of indices, most strikingly political leadership. Out of 140+ countries, Nicaragua is ranked near the top — seventh, just behind Iceland, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Rwanda.

This is huge progress because back in 2007, Nicaragua was ranked somewhere south of #80. When Daniel Ortega was re-elected in 2006, less than 10% of elected officials were women. Today, over half of the seats in the National Assembly are occupied by women lawmakers. Over 40% of all local mayors are women. By law, even presidential tickets are required to include women.



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In comparison, at #27, the US is ranked much further down on the list. Our Congress still only has 28% women in the House and 25% in the Senate.

### Progress in educating girls

To make public education more accessible to girls, the Nicaraguan government has eliminated school fees and introduced free lunch programs. Today, more than half of all elementary school students are girls. In the Davos Report's Educational Attainment category, girls in Nicaragua were rockin' it – Nicaragua was tied at #1 in 2020 for girls' school enrollments and literacy rates.

### On the ground realities for Nicaraguan women

At the same time, we know that the gender gap is all too real for so many Nicaraguan women who face persistent discrimination, lack of opportunity, and violence.

Just this past week the Nicaraguan independent press, La Prensa (in exile in Costa Rica), reported on a 30 year-old woman, pregnant, who was killed by her partner. If you read Nicaraguan press regularly like we do, femicide is sadly a common occurrence.

In fact, Spanish newspaper El País reported that as many as half of all women in Nicaragua experience some form of gender-based violence – violence often attributed to unintended pregnancies. El País also reported that according to the United Nations Population Fund, “Nicaragua has the second highest rate of adolescent pregnancies in Latin America. Almost 30% of women give birth before age 18, and half of those are girls ages 10-14.”

As for reproductive health and rights, Nicaragua has the most restrictive laws in Latin America, with no exception for abortion in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the woman is at risk. This may sound familiar to many of us in the US, as states like Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi have adopted similar policies.

And as for educational opportunities, the increase of girls in primary school is impressive, but we see that by the time children get past elementary school in Nicaragua, the attendance of girls begins to drop. By adulthood, Nicaraguan women are entering a very segregated workforce and earn far less than men, the worst economic gender gap in Central America.

This is all happening in a climate in which the government has cracked down on civil society. Over the past two years, over 2000 NGO's, universities and religious organizations have been shut down and, at times, their assets seized. Many of those organizations were feminist and women's organizations - some of the same ones that pushed for the legislation to make gender parity in the political sphere a reality.

### The US government has made the road harder for Nicaraguan women

Our own country's history in Nicaragua -- funding mercenaries to terrorize the civilian population in the 1980's, resulting in decades of poverty and instability – has of course contributed to gender inequality in significant ways.

## MADISON BIKE SWAP ON MOTHER'S DAY

# GOT BIKES?

Donate and Re-cycle at  
the Madison Community  
**BIKE SWAP**



**WHAT:** Madison Community Bike Swap

**WHEN:** Sunday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**WHERE:** 50 Central Ave. - Central Avenue School,  
Madison, NJ

**TIME:** 9 am - 11 am

**DONATE:** Drop off bikes at 218 Central Ave.,  
from May 1<sup>st</sup> - morning of May 14<sup>th</sup>.

## ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT PEACEWORKS!

# AXAYACATL: SUPPORTING WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS



Workshops on gender & identity.



New pushcarts (w/ anti-violence against girls poster)



Learning construction to build their own homes.



New tools for new construction projects.



Home visits for women in rural areas.



Building cisterns & learning water conservation.



Livestock for rural women.

US fears of socialism led to enormous human and economic loss in Nicaragua, wiping out an entire generation's collective wealth just as impoverished Nicaraguans attempted to stand on their feet after four decades of US-backed dictatorship. And when economies stumble, women and children are always the hardest hit.

This is why we feel so strongly about supporting projects that reduce gender inequality, poverty and violence. Our partners at the Axayacatl Women's Collective in Masaya work on exactly these issues.

## Women helping women: A typical day at Axayacatl

For almost two decades the women of Axayacatl have opened their doors to the very women whose lives are defined by the numbers the Davos Report missed: women at the hands of abusive partners who have left them isolated and scared for themselves and their children.

From the moment you enter the Axayacatl offices, you are surrounded by beauty and friendship. Individually, women can get the support they need to recognize abuse and take action to stop it.

But Axayacatl's strength lies in its collective nature of solidarity. On any particular day, you may find trained groups of women supporting each other to break the isolation, and when needed, make abusers aware they are being watched.

You may find a group of journalists receiving training on how to better report on the legal and personal realities of domestic violence. Learning how not to re-victimize women with sensationalized stories and images. On another day you could follow the Axayacatl team to a radio station where they inform the public about women's rights and legal options.

To help women address the stress and anxiety of trauma, Axayacatl teaches strategies like meditation and better nutrition. The team provides skills training, helping women work towards economic independence. You may go to the rural countryside where they organize women to become independent, self-sufficient farmers. Most recently, they've been helping women learn how to cut hair and acquire construction skills. When women learn a new job skill, like cutting hair, they're also trained to identify and reach out to other women experiencing violence.

### Join our summer delegation to Nicaragua

Consider joining us on our delegation in July to see for yourself what the Davos data cannot hide – the situation for women is tough, but Nicaraguan women are tougher. As always, we are so very grateful for your support through the years. We look forward to working with you and these incredible women for years to come!

In solidarity,

Denis, Diane, Guy, John, Maggie, Marilyn, Micha and Susan (The PeaceWorks Board)

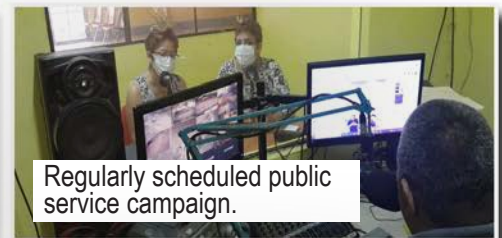
## AXAYACATL: EDUCATION & ADVOCACY



"Self-help" group for survivors of domestic violence.



Workshop for "community defenders" against violence.



Regularly scheduled public service campaign.



Launch of campaign against violence during the pandemic

### People-to-people projects in the works!

Rural development program for women (Axayacatl)  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

\$7.5k needed to help develop Fedicamp's next potable water project and support family farms  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

Health, educational & cultural programming for street kids at Inhijambia  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

College Scholarships for former street kids (Inhijambia) \$1250 per one year scholarship  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

Rebuild the "Jim Burchell Health Clinic at El Porvenir Coffee Co-op  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

Education and therapy for children with disabilities (Chispa de Vida)  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

Sea turtle conservation (Juan Venado Sea Turtle Sanctuary)  
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$\_\_\_\_\_

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