



2023 Year in Review



Nicole Opgenorth - Nicaragua

A glimpse at what your support made possible:

Dora is just one of the women blessed by your generous gifts. As a mother to six with many grandchildren, she struggled to help contribute financially to the family. When she heard about CEPAD's Women's Entrepreneurship Program, her interest was piqued and she started attending the workshops. She learned how to manage funds, promote her business, and save for the future. Dora then received her first loan of \$190 and used it to invest in various cooking materials.

Dora now sells traditional Nicaraguan dishes and has a corner store. Every Saturday, she goes to sell her food at the school where she earns \$100 to \$140 each month. To put that into perspective, many rural Nicaraguans make less than \$2 a day while working many long hours, so Dora's new business is truly life-changing.

Dora has been invited to local fairs where she can share her products with others. She also recently won a national fair, with a prize of around \$270. She can reinvest some of her profit back into her business, save for emergencies, and pay for household needs. Dora's business is growing and, in the future, so will her profits. She is hoping to do some home repairs soon and is excited about sharing her business with all of YOU.



This year, we had four church groups and one volunteer come to Nicaragua with CEPAD through RCA Global Mission. It is a joy for me to help host these groups and to serve as their language and culture interpreter. While I feel very grateful for the opportunity to share the place and people that I love with others, it is a very big blessing for our regional staff and rural communities that we serve to receive these visits.

Many of these rural communities have felt ignored or abandoned by the rest of the world, so the fact that people heard about them from so far away and chose to spend their time and money visiting them is seen as an honor. Walking through farms, visiting small businesses, and meeting in local churches, the Nicaraguans glow with pride in all that they have accomplished and their dreams for the future.

It is a small glimpse of heaven to see the Lord's people gathered as one and fellowship with one another, even with a language barrier for many. Hosting groups is easily one of the best parts of serving with CEPAD, and we had a great time this year! If you or your church is looking for mission opportunities and would be interested in visiting CEPAD, please reach out with any questions you may have.



Our challenges of 2023

Nicaragua has passed many new laws over the past couple of years to provide more structure and transparency in the ways that NGOs report to the government. While CEPAD had already been keeping very detailed reports and accounting statements, this has put extra pressure on staff to stay up to date and to fill out the new formats. We are still lacking some of the official acceptance documentation that we need. This has led to delays in transferring funds, postponed our construction project, and, for me, delayed the process of applying for my residency. We are hoping that next year we will receive this documentation to be able to proceed with the projects that have been delayed. While some things have been postponed, we can operate and execute the programs we provide in rural communities.

On a personal level, I have had several housing challenges this past year, which have resulted in not one but TWO moves. Moving is stressful and then factor in navigating a whole different real estate system in a foreign language. It has been an exercise in patience, trust, and flexibility, to say the least. It has been frustrating as having a safe place to live is a basic need.

I am very blessed to have an adoptive Nicaraguan family who has been a MAJOR help in finding new places to live, double-checking rental contracts, negotiating prices, and packing up and moving. They are a big blessing to me in so many ways, and I would be absolutely lost without them.

I'm very thankful to have found a new place to live and moved in just before Thanksgiving. I am hoping that this new home will be a refuge and sanctuary for me, as well as respectful and honest landlords who prove to be responsible for their property.



Please Pray

- For the ongoing documentation process. May the Lord guide us at each check-in, providing the correct paperwork to each department so as not to delay our projects.
- My new home would be a sanctuary for me and would provide stable housing.
- Looking ahead to 2024, there is a LOT of travel on my schedule, both around Nicaragua with hosting groups and a big visit to the U.S. to meet with all of my supporting churches. Please pray with me for safety, health, and strength in all these trips.

Thank you!
Nicole