

Assistance Projects for Morrito, Nicaragua

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By Ethan and Elena Casaday

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to describe funding needs for poverty reduction and assistance projects in Morrito, Nicaragua.

Background Information

Nicaragua is considered to be the second poorest country in all of the Americas. Morrito is a municipio (similar to a county in the US) in the departamento (similar to a State) of Rio San Juan. The Municipio covers 677 Km² of semi-humid tropical savanna used primarily for raising cattle and cultivation of rice, beans, and corn. The total population is approximately 1,000 “town” residents and 5,000 rural habitants, with includes a total of about 3,000 people under the age of 16-years-old (Morrito, 2002).



Figure 1. The Americas include the North, Central, and South American continents.



Figure 2. Map of Central America showing Nicaragua bordered by Honduras, the Caribbean Sea, Costa Rica, and the Pacific Ocean.

According to the World Bank, more than 25% of rural Nicaraguans live in extreme poverty, living on less than 1 dollar a day. One in five children is chronically malnourished. In 1999, of eligible primary students, 75 percent were enrolled, with 32.6 percent of eligible secondary students in school, and literacy was 65.7 percent for all citizens over the age of 15 (Education, 1999).

Projects

Education Assistance

Morrito has 16 schools serving approximately 1300 children with 30 teachers. Only the town of Morrito has a secondary school (6-11), the remaining are primary (K-5). Ten of the schools are small, single room buildings constructed with thatch roofs and no walls. These schools have several small desks and use a small piece of lumber as a chalkboard.

Students often come to school without paper, pencils, or any other supplies. A uniform is usually mandatory, along with a small fee to cover expense to maintain the building.

Using the World Bank's cutoff of 25% extreme poverty, about 325 students in Morrito are in desperate need of assistance. These children can't afford to buy the paper and pencils needed to take advantage of their education, and even further out of reach are a backpack, calculator, and books. However, probably 95% of all Morrito students have difficulty paying for school supplies. Among human capital investments, education stands out as critically linked to poverty reduction and improved productivity (Poverty, 2003).



Figure 3. Map of Nicaragua showing the Departamentos and Municipios.



Figure 4. Municipio of Morrito separated into community areas.

One-fourth of Nicaraguan women 15 to 19 years old were mothers in 2001 or had been pregnant. Low education levels are closely associated with adolescent pregnancy. Almost one-half (46 percent) of adolescents with no education have been pregnant at one time, as compared to only 5 percent of those with higher education.

The goal of this project is to improve childrens education in Morrito by supplying 10 dry erase boards for the rural schools and provide pencils, pens, and notebooks for those with the greatest need. Shipping a 20 pound package to Nicaragua using the USPS costs \$37.00 dollars. Rather than shipping from the U.S., Eda Gricelda Medina de Gonzales (Edita), a highly respected and trusted Morrito resident, will purchase all items in Nicaragua and distribute them to the schools. With the assistance of the Municipal Judge, teachers, and other community members, Mrs. Gonzales will provide receipts for all goods purchased, photographs of children accepting the gifts, photographs of the Dry-Eraser boards being installed, and a thank you letter signed by students. A final report will be prepared for distribution to project donors.



Figure 5. Edita (left) with family members including Municipal Judge Juan Sandino (right) and Morrito founding father Francisco Vidal Medina Perez (seated center).



Figure 6. Typical Nicaraguan children full of hope and happiness.

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Education Assistance project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Dry Erase Board	10	\$20	\$200
Dry-Erase Pens	40	\$1.00	\$40
Pencils	625	\$.08	\$50
Pens	200	\$.25	\$50
Notebook	300	\$.75	\$225
Calculator	20	\$2.00	\$40
Uniforms	10	\$5.00	\$40
Backpacks			
Total			\$645.00

This table is an estimate based on the retail cost of school supplies in Granada. The actual amount of each item purchased will be decided by onsite based on availability and actual costs.

Sports Health and Well-Being Project

The national sport of Nicaragua is Baseball, with soccer being the second most popular. Young people love to gather to play a game because it provides relief from the daily labor and is an opportunity to socialize with neighbors. Sports help reduce alcoholism by providing activities for young men and improves health by providing aerobic exercise. Unfortunately, almost no one can afford to buy gloves or balls. Children often play soccer with an empty plastic milk jug, or hit a baseball with a bat hand carved from a tree branch and catch with their bare hands.



Photo 7. Edita (fourth from right, seated) discussing her donation of baseball equipment and the benefits of daily exercise.



Photo 8. Kids showing off their prized soccer balls. (Photo from <http://anniebower.theworldrace.org>)

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Sports and Well-Being project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Soccer Balls	10		
Softballs	10		
Baseballs	10		
Baseball Gloves	40		
Baseball Bats	10		
Total			\$300

School Building Improvements

Ten of the rural schools in Morrito are simple palm or tin roof structures on 4 posts with a dirt floor with several desks inside.

This project involves building new school buildings using concrete blocks on a concrete slab and a tin roof.



Figure 9. Example of the typical construction style for rural schools of Morrito.



Figure 10. A school building under construction in a rural Nicaraguan community. (Photo from www.seadsoflearning.org)

The following financial donations are needed to implement the School Building Improvement project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Cement			
Sand			
Concrete Blocks			
Lumber			
Sheet metal roofing			
Labor			
Total			\$1,000 per building

Internet Access

Currently, no public internet access exists in Morrito. This project involves establishing an internet access point for use by the schools and the public. The project requires the donation of computers and the installation of a satellite dish.

Internet can be an enabling tool for wider socio-economic development. When properly used, it can greatly increase the ability of the poor to benefit from economic development and from development programs. Internet can enhance the activities of the poor and increasing their productivity by increasing their access to market information or lowering the transaction costs. Poor people are often unaware of their rights, entitlements and availability of various government schemes and extension services. Through internet, Morrito farmers can access information on market prices or on extension services and workers can get information on available jobs and wages. Internet can have a major role in reducing the impact of natural disasters on the poor in low-income countries. Internet can play a major role in supporting a culture of democracy, democratic processes and civic values that uphold a democratic system. Internet can promote health and education of the poor and reduce poverty that can originate from poor health. Information related to all of the projects in this report can be found on the internet, and contacts can be made between Morrito and funding sources for various projects.

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Internet Access project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Computers	10	Donation	
Shipping			\$500
Sattelite Connection	1	\$3,500	\$3,500
Tables, Chairs			\$200
Accessories			\$200
Electricity	12 months	\$50	\$600
Training			\$200
Maintenance			\$200
Total			\$5,400.00

Road Construction

The purpose of this project is to provide vehicular access to the fertile farmland located south of the town of Morrito. This area is currently served by walking, horseback and animal carts.

Road rehabilitation is generally considered by development institutions as a critical link in the efforts to reduce poverty by providing rural farmers access to basic services and markets, and providing them opportunities to improve their own life. Improved roads, especially when combined with other transport improvements, help empower people by providing them with physical, social, and political access. Road rehabilitation development projects have the potential to reduce poverty and improve the lives of women and children, especially if projects are designed with an understanding of gender roles within communities and the particular needs of women. Improved road infrastructure can help release people from time consuming tasks and give them more time to invest in economic or socially beneficial activities.

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Road Construction project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Layout and Design			\$1,000
Engineering			\$500
Labor			
Equipment			
Materials			
Training			
Total			\$10,000

Water Supply

The purpose of this project is to provide improved potable water sources to the town of Morrito and outlying communities. Wells will be hand dug and a photovoltaic water pump installed to supply a nearby storage tank.

The project would also provide the technology and training to build carts to aide in transportation of water from the wells to individual homes.

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Water Supply project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Labor			
Training			
Photo Voltaic Panels			
Submersible Pumps			
Parts / Accessories			
Water Tanks			
Accessories			
Total			\$10,000

Community Boat Transportation

The most beneficial, yet most expensive, this project would provide access from Morrito to the primary markets in Nicaragua using a motor boat with an on-board refrigerator or freezer. This project would dramatically boost the economy of Morrito by allowing the rapid transportation of fish, beef, dairy, fruits and vegetables to Granada, the second largest city in Nicaragua. A community boat could cut in half the current travel time of 8 hours to the Capital City Managua, thereby improving access to medical facilities, Universities, and other social and economic opportunity.

Fish are considered to be one of Nicaragua's most valuable resources. However, without refrigeration, fishing in Morrito is limited to daily consumption by locals.

The current transportation options from Granada to Morrito includes an 8 hour boat ride on the Granada-San Carlos ferry, an 8 hour drive in a high clearance 4 wheel drive truck, or 12 hour bus trip. The overland route involves traveling on some of the worst roads imaginable, with potholes that can latterly destroy the vehicle if the driver makes a mistake and mud that closes the road during rainstorms.



Figure 11. Four wheel drive vehicle on the main highway between San Carlos and the Capital, the main access route to Morrito.



Figure 12. Passengers get some fresh air during the twice weekly 8 hour boat ride between Morrito and Granada or San Carlos.

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Community Boat Transportation project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Motor Boat			\$40,000
Refregerator or Freezer Hold			\$5,000
Launch Facilities			\$500
Training			\$500
Maintenance and Repair			\$1,000
Total			\$47,000.00

Community Development Center

The purpose of this project is to create and staff a community development center in the town of Morrito. The Center director would organize workshops, provide information, and assist the community in all aspects of development.

The following financial donations are needed to implement the Community Development Center project:

Item	Quantity	Amount Each	Total Amount
Staff Position	1	\$2,000	\$2,000
Office Rent			\$2,000
Total			\$10,000.00

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