

Re-Building Communities

NICARAGUA



WHAT?

Travel to Nicaragua to assist in building homes for those in need.

Growing up I would often visit Mexico, specifically Baja California. Through my visits, I quickly realized that the living conditions were well below the standard of living in the United States. I experienced living in a shelter that was put together with any available building material. Tires were filled with dirt and used as steps down a hill. Wood palettes were used for exterior walls and trash bags covered the roof in an attempt to keep water out. Something as simple as taking a shower was such an eye opener: from having to warm up the water on a stovetop and then using buckets to splash the water on oneself.

These humble living conditions inspired and motivated me to pursue a career in a field where I can one day assist these communities. With the skills I have acquired in the field of Architecture while at Cal Poly Pomona and Ruhnau Clarke Architects, I feel I have the experience to help build homes for communities in third world countries that are in need.

One country that hits home is Nicaragua, my mother's birthplace. Unfortunately she has not traveled back for more than 30 years. Her siblings and parents joined her in the United States shortly after she left and communication with distant relatives slowly diminished over the years. Hearing stories of her upbringing in poverty, where inadequate shelter and resources took lives of her younger siblings, always stuck with me. It is why I believe this is a country in which I could lend a helping hand and assist in the re-building of a stronger and safer home for a family whose current living condition is in need of a urgent improvement. Lastly, during my exploration I hope to discover Nicaraguan culture which ironically I know little about.



Image of a typical community seen in Tijuana during a visit in 2006

INSPIRED AND MOTIVATED ME...HOW CAN I GIVE BACK?



TIJUANA, MEXICO

Image of a typical home seen in Tijuana during a visit in 2006

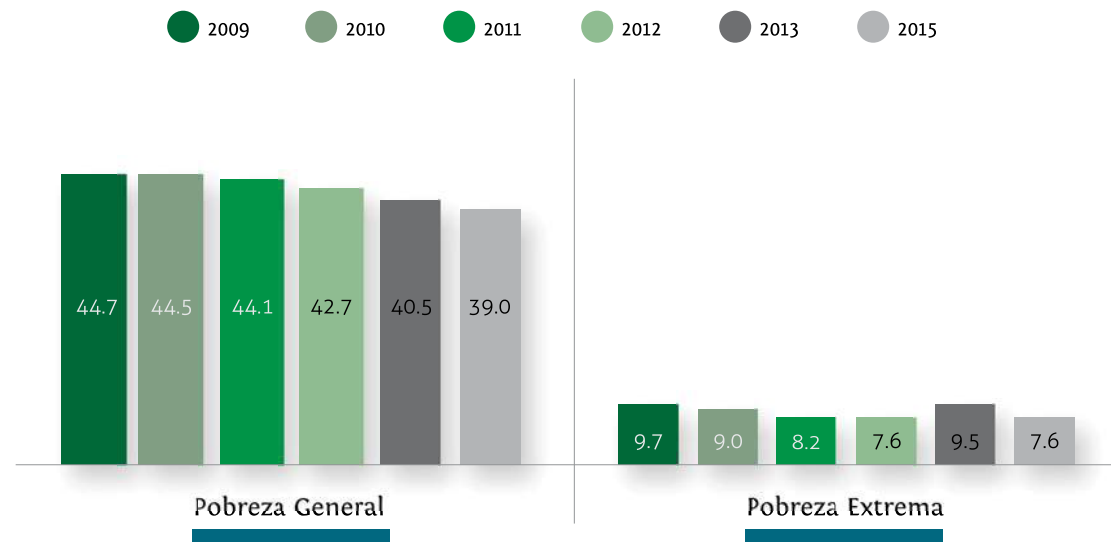
WHY?

Nicaragua is the poorest country in Central America.

As of 2015, 39% of the country's population is living below the poverty line and 7.6% is living in extreme poverty. One can only imagine the living conditions in some of these communities. At least 20,000 new homes are needed per year in Nicaragua, with more than half of existing homes needing improvements.

Gráfico 1.1

Porcentaje de la población que vive en Pobreza a nivel Nacional según condición de Pobreza.
Nicaragua, 2009 - 2015



Fuente: Fideg 2009 - 2015

7.6%
extreme
poverty

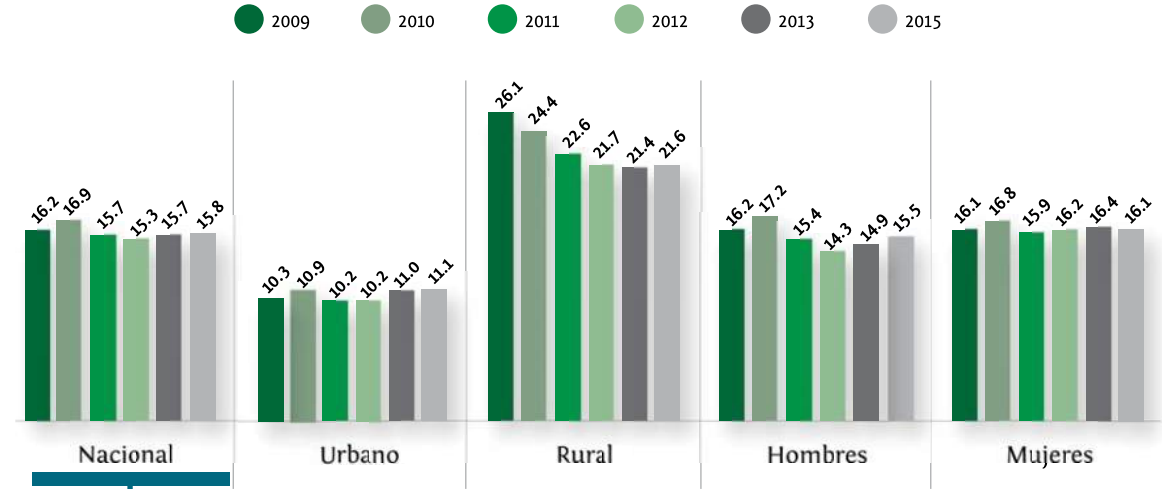
39%
below
poverty line

15.8%
illiteracy

17.8%
college
education

Gráfico 3.1

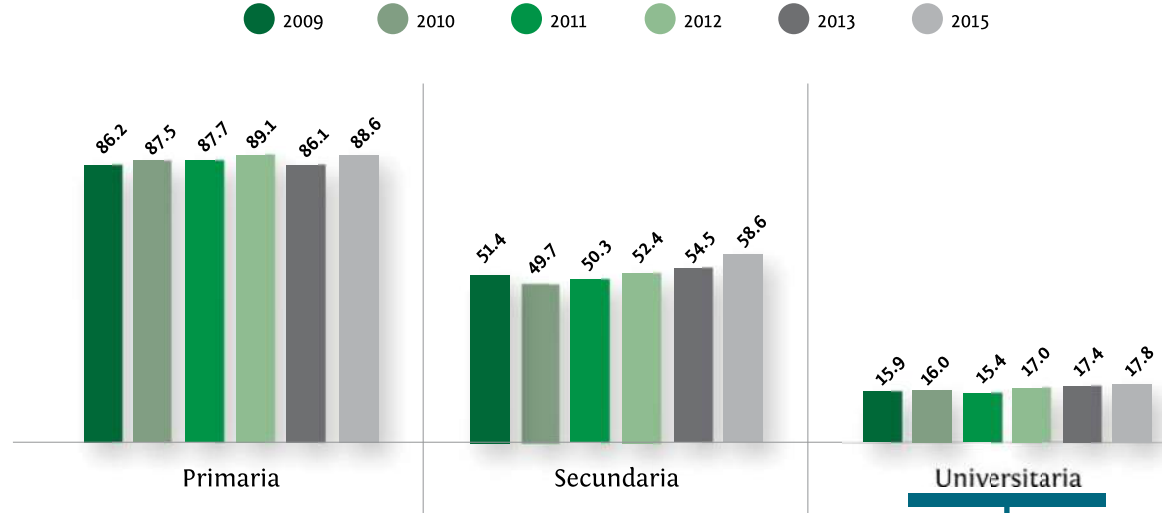
Tasa de Analfabetismo de la Población de 10 años de edad y más por Área de Residencia y Sexo. Nicaragua, 2009 - 2015



Fuente: Fideg 2009 - 2015

Gráfico 3.2

Tasa de Neta de Matrícula por Nivel Educativo Nicaragua, 2009 - 2015



Fuente: Fideg 2009 - 2015

HOW?

By volunteering with a global organization like *Habitat for Humanity*.

When the idea of traveling to Nicaragua came to me, I had no idea how I would achieve it. With no contacts and no financial means to build a home for someone out of my own pocket, I began to wonder how I would execute this idea. I began to do research and stumbled upon Habitat for Humanity. They are an organization that strive to assist those in need of adequate shelter, not only on a national level but globally as well. As fate may have it, they have actually been assisting communities in Nicaragua for some time now. Since 1984, the organization has supported the construction of 8,773 homes in Nicaragua.

Volunteering through Habitat for Humanity would allow me to achieve my dream of being able to assist those in need. I will be able to travel to Nicaragua, meet with local families in need of adequate housing and literally lend a hand in the construction of it. Furthermore, I will be able to hear testimonies of local families' current living conditions and how the support from Habitat for Humanity has impacted their lives.



"ADVOCATES FOR THE RIGHT
TO A DECENT HOME AND FOR
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT"

- *Habitat for Humanity Nicaragua*

"THERE'S NOTHING SADDER THAN NOT HAVING A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE"

- Ana Mayerling Velázquez Rugama, resident of Estelí, Nicaragua



BEFORE

No proper foundation

No security

No protection against weather

Building materials are of any available scraps

"DURING THE WINTERS I CRIED BECAUSE I WAS GETTING WET AND I HAD TO PUT THE BED IN THE ONLY CORNER OF THE HOUSE WHERE THE WATER FROM THE ROOF DID NOT FALL"

- Betsayda German, resident of San Rafael del Sur, Nicaragua



RE-BUILDING



"I HAVE LEARNED THAT OUR GREATEST BLESSINGS COME WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OTHERS, AND THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN THOSE OTHERS ARE DESPERATELY POOR OR IN NEED."

- **Jimmy Carter**, Former U.S. President & Habitat for Humanity volunteer

" BEFORE, IN THE OTHER HOUSE, WE WERE AFRAID...NOW WE FEEL SAFER AGAINST THIEVES AND ALSO AGAINST THE RAINY SEASON - EVEN " AGAINST EARTHQUAKES

- Estela Calero, resident of San Rafael del Sur, Nicaragua



Proper doors for security

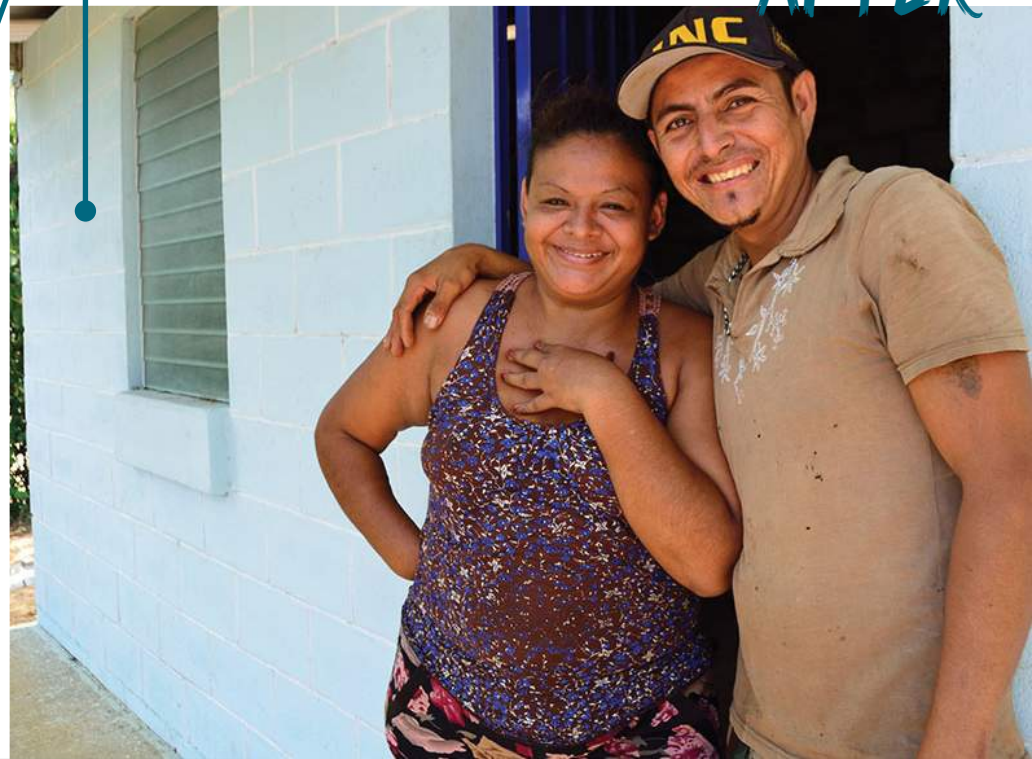
Pop of color

Proper concrete paving/foundation

Proper windows for natural ventilation

Walls constructed of reinforced Concrete Masonry Units

AFTER



IMPACT?

Share the experience of building construction outside the United States in a country that doesn't have all the resources we are used to seeing in our projects at Ruhnau Clarke Architects

Construction has always caught my attention and it is one of the reasons I elected a career in Architecture. Seeing a project during construction is fascinating to me especially when you spent countless hours drafting each little detail of the project and then seeing it come to reality.

During a typical construction site visit I usually see all sorts of machinery/technology, from a backhoe to a crane to a scissor lift to laser measuring tapes. Now transport yourself to a construction site in a country where poverty thrives and resources are scarce. What would that look like? How are projects constructed? This is something I hope to document and share with my fellow colleagues at Ruhnau Clarke Architects. I would like to compare the means & methods of construction and document their process. I'd be interested to find out what types of 'Lessons Learned' occur during the construction of homes in a rural part of Nicaragua that is poverty-stricken. I plan to bring back documentation of my experience through photographs, videos, notes, interviews and maintain a live feed throughout my journey.

Besides sharing knowledge that has direct ties with our profession, I also hope to inspire my colleagues to volunteer within their communities and assist those that may be in need of a helping hand.



Share

**"I VOLUNTEER IN THE HOPE THAT
IT WILL INSPIRE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME"**

- Donna Ricca, Habitat for Humanity volunteer

Observe



- Drawings vs Reality
- Lessons Learned
- Incorporate professional experience from R.C.A.



- Means & Methods Outside U.S.
- Communication between Contractors/Locals/Volunteers



- Construction Process
- Interviews

Document



- Construction Progress Before/During/After
- Culture



BUILDING ON A FOUNDATION OF PAST MEMORIES TO BUILD A HOME FOR NEW ONES



SOURCES:

Habitat for Humanity
<https://www.habitat.org>
<https://www.habitat.org/where-we-build/nicaragua>

Habitat for Humanity Nicaragua
<https://www.habitatnicaragua.org/en/>

FIDEG Fundación Internacional para el Desafío Económico Global
<http://fideg.org/>

