

Education in Nicaragua

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and the economic situation families face is difficult, with high unemployment and low wages. While the government does provide free education, families must pay for uniforms, transportation, and other school supplies. Because of these limitations and pressures to have children help at home or by working, the average education of rural children is only at the 3rd grade level, and only at the 5th grade level for city students. Barely 50% of



A preschool class in Goyena.

children presently make it to the 6th grade. Most classes are multi-grade and have over 40 students. Teachers are often quite young, have limited training, and receive very

low salaries. Many teachers need to take on extra work to make ends meet, limiting the time available for classroom preparation.

Goyena is primarily an agricultural community with a significant number of families earning a living by working for a large sugar cane plantation that pays \$130/month.



Students in León school.

Currently Goyena is home to a preschool, two primary schools, and a secondary school which only opened two years ago.

School Stories from Nicaragua

Mariela Garcia is a young 23 year old woman who could not study when she was younger because of the lack of support she received from her parents. They felt that studying was not important for her life. But two years ago Mariela decided to attend literacy classes that were being offered in her community. Mariela has a son named Angel who is in 2nd grade. Now Mariela and Angel (**photo at right**) are studying together and learning new and interesting things and Mariela can now help Angel with his homework.

Genesis and Ronal are 5 year olds who attend the third level of pre-school. These children live in the community of Goyena Sur which is 2 km away from school. They are transported to school daily by their parents or siblings and are very excited when they get home from school to say what they have learned in preschool - coloring, counting, singing, playing with their peers, and they go home singing the songs they learned that day.



Jen Goldberg showing how to use manipulatives in Goyena.

Reflections on Nicaraguan Education

“Although our delegation spent only 8 days in Nicaragua, some major issues affecting the quality of education jumped out at us immediately after observing in their schools and talking to the teachers, students, and parents. For example, there is almost a total absence of books and extremely limited supplies in the schools, particularly in Goyena. While we did note that the older students had individual notebooks and pencils, there were no other books seen in any of our Goyena observations.

Teachers receive limited teacher training and their salaries are extremely low, especially in rural areas, requiring most of them to hold second or third jobs just to earn a living. In fact, the two preschool teachers in Goyena have not received any pay so far this year from the Ministry of Education, who claim they simply lack the necessary funds.

While the normal classroom size in the United States is 25 students, the required “minimum” size of a classroom in Nicaragua is 40 students. Despite such limitations, the teachers we observed in Nicaragua are dedicated to the education of these children and want to create interesting, challenging lessons for their students.”

Excerpted from an article by Jen Goldberg who traveled to Goyena in 2010. Jen is Assistant Professor and the Director of the Elementary Education Program at the Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions at Fairfield University and is a member the NH/LSCP Advisory Committee on Education. For complete article see NH/LSCP Spring newsletter at http://www.newhavenleon.org/more_resources



Mariela and Angel in front of bus used to take workers to cane fields.