



New Haven/León Sister City Project

Fall 2021 Newsletter



Climate Change Impacts Rural Nicaraguan Villages

by Yaranesi Perez

The effects of climate change in Nicaragua are increasingly visible to families in rural areas, including in the communities of Goyena and Troilo, where I live and work.

In recent years, these rural villages - which are surrounded by sugar cane plantations - have been increasingly affected by climate change. Impacts include late arriving and very intense rains, and hurricanes - two major storms hit within two weeks last November 2020. These caused increased soil erosion and flooded low-lying and vulnerable areas. We also see increases in temperatures, more dust storms, and the water table is falling in the community wells in the

summer. Global warming is also increasing the number of cases of kidney disease and respiratory illness.

The scarcity of water is one factor that particularly affects small farmers, decreasing productivity and the quality and quantity of the crops harvested. Some families have looked for alternative irrigation systems that use gravity or electric pumps to bring the plants the vital liquid. But this type of irrigation adds costs and lowers profits. Due to these pressures on farmers, prices of basic grains have increased, and many families do not have the economic resources to buy them, especially with the present economic crisis.

One example of more extreme weather was tropical storm "Nate" in 2017. This storm was characterized by abundant rains, which caused flooding in different parts of

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Mural above from Estilí, Nicaragua

Global Leaders Echo UN "Code Red" Climate Warning

• "Climate change poses an existential threat to our lives, to our economy. And the threat is here. It's not going to get any better. ... The nation and the world are in peril. That's not hyperbole; that is a fact." **President Joe Biden.**

• "We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the Earth's resources than the planet can endure...." **Pope Francis**, the leader of the Roman Catholic church, **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew**, the spiritual leader of the Orthodox church, and the archbishop of Canterbury, **Justin Welby**, who is the leader of the global Anglican communion.

• "The alarm bells are deafening," he said in a statement. "This report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels, before they destroy our planet." **U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres** described the report as a "code red for humanity."

• "Rises above 1.5° C increase the chance of reaching tipping points in natural systems that could lock the world into an acutely unstable state. This would critically impair our ability to mitigate harms and to prevent catastrophic, runaway environmental change." **More than 200 medical journals** call for emergency action on 'catastrophic' climate change.

Rural Impact *continued...*

of Nicaragua. In the community of Troilo, 25 families living on the banks of the river lost clothes, shoes, food, among other things, when the river overflowed and entered their homes, wetting beds and everything they had in their homes. Some people had planted some vegetables and greens and sadly lost all this effort.

The situation was worsened further because the wells that they use for drinking water, washing dishes, and doing their daily chores were contaminated by feces that came from the flooding of their latrines.

One of the negative actions carried out by local residents that worsens the environmental situation is the cutting of trees on the banks of the rivers to make furniture, and to sell as firewood for cooking. The burning of garbage at home, and the fumigation and burning by large corporate plantations add extra air pollution. Many of these actions are due to the lack of government programs that promotes environmental education, and that involve the population in the defense and preservation of local natural resources.

NHLSCP is currently working with women from the Goyena and Troilo on environmental projects. The delivery of ecological stoves allows the reduction of unnecessary firewood combustion, lessens carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and reduces



Two girls heading home from school in Goyena traversing flooded roads.

respiratory tract diseases caused by the excess smoke. The program is positively influencing a change in the culture and awareness of the beneficiaries, and they are given an awareness of the proper use of these fuel-saving stoves. Families have shown interest and satisfaction with this program which promotes a healthier home and local environment.

Yara Perez was born and raised in Goyena, earned a degree in Environmental Studies at UNAN-Leon. Yara works part time with NHLSCP leading the Ecostove project and supporting other programs. and is also a high school teacher in Goyena. Below, Yara leading an Afterschool Program activity in Troilo.



León Project Updates



Photos above: The Domestic Violence Prevention Program began a series of meetings with women to talk about self-care, and emotional health in these times of pandemic and crisis. For the women this workshop was emotional. They shared how good it makes them feel that they have a space where they can talk about their feelings, their emotions, and their daily struggles! NHLSCP can facilitate this space thanks to the work that has been done constructing trust and sisterhood.



Sexual Abuse Workshops: "Always believe your child - s/he never lies about abuse issues." This and many more phrases were used in workshops on the prevention of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence. This work is super important, and the workshops allow mothers, parents, and the general population to prevent sexual abuse in children. The workshops were held in the communities of Goyena and Troilo where there has been an increase in child abuse there due to the COVID/economic crisis.

Work and Life in León: By the Numbers

There is A LOT going on in Nicaragua, both nationally and locally, so here's a few numbers to give a sense of this extra challenging present moment.

55 Goyena Afterschool students and 42 students fin the Troilo Afterschool Program

8 presidential candidates and over 30 opposition leaders arrested ahead on November national elections.

38 Goyena preschool students, and 50 students in Troilo's preschool

12 high school students in a new volunteer led afterschool program, with a special focus on math skills.

3 women's workshops were held recently in each community (Goyena and Troilo) about self-care and gender strategies in times of crisis.

30 houses are being built by the government in Troilo for which families will pay 300 dollars to cover some materials and the rest will be assumed by the government (Part of a 100 home project)

Two NHLSCP Leon staff have had COVID.

13 four hour trips Erendira and the NHLSCP accountant have taken to comply with new NGO registration law ... and NHLSCP STILL not registered!

Significant rise in unemployment, cost of basic products, and young people in the community taking drugs.

110,000 Nicaraguans have sought international protection globally, the majority of them in neighboring Costa Rica.

250 families benefiting from government funded installation of potable water project in the community of Troilo. The families have organized and pushed the San Antonio sugar mill to dig ditches for the pipes

10 out of 13 Family gardens harvesting chiltoma, onion, tomatoes, pipianes, squash, chayotes, good grass (yerba buena), Jamaica flower, coriander, spinach, papaya, taro and pineapple. Three...?

Energy Solidarity

"Our neighborhood is graced by many trees, keeping things nice and cool and thought this would make it hard to get solar panels. We had an evaluation and found that we had plenty of sun. We worked with the company to estimate how many panels would be appropriate, based on our power use history. We had 17 panels installed a couple of years ago. In the most recent year, our production matched our consumption nearly exactly. Our house is electrically fossil fuel free!"



Photo: NHLSCP leader Susan Bramhall at home with her solar panels helping reduce climate impacts globally.



NHCM youth leaders after the climate rally on September 24th. Kiana Flores is in the bottom row, 3rd from the right.

Family Displaced by Hurricane Mitch

Below is and excerpt from a speech Kiana Flores gave at the NHCM rally on September 24th.

"In 1998 my dad was displaced from Honduras because of Hurricane Mitch. This disaster wreaked havoc on a country where approximately 64% of the population lives on \$2 a day. This storm wiped out farms, infrastructure and left thousands of people dead. Those who didn't die were left without a home, forcing them to flee.

Unfortunately, this story is not unique. This cycle of climate-induced natural disasters, poverty, and destruction hurting some of the most vulnerable communities has become a frequent occurrence. It is the droughts and storms in Central America, monsoons and floods in South Asia, droughts in Africa, wildfires in Australia, and the list goes on, and on, and on... that are hurting people...."



New Haven Leon SCP climate change projects include the New Haven Climate Movement, and the Climate Health Education Project, which are working to reduce climate impacts in Nicaragua and Connecticut.



Spring/Summer Youth Climate Organizing Timeline

NHLSCP's New Haven Climate Movement and Climate Health Education Project have been busy. Below are some highlights.

April: Board of Alders passes the New Haven Electrification Resolution committing City to electrify operations and buildings, which will reduce GHG emissions and other air pollution.

May: Conclude Climate Health Education Project student intern led 2020-21 in-school education work in seven area high schools.

May/June: City grants \$10,000 to fund youth climate education fairs at farmers markets, street banner painting, and climate education workshops for teachers.

June; Organized media event presenting potential grades to Board of Education for their decision about whether will use part of millions in federal funds coming on climate and energy projects. (Photo: above right)

June: Begin meeting with different City department heads to implement Electrification Resolution

July: City commits funds and Board of Education agrees to implement Climate Justice Schools pilot on five public high schools in 20221-22. All projects completed by end of June. (Photos: top left and left)

July: NHCM organizes Earth Overshoot Day (which happens in drenching rain storm) to call for reducing carbon emissions and City investment. (Photo: below)



León Project Updates



Photos: Top, Group of Afterschool Program teachers celebrates Teacher's Day; Bottom photo, part of the Children's Day events.



Above: Training with the organization Project Prevention Nicaragua on issues of sexual abuse, human trafficking and security, for teachers from the communities of Goyena and Troilo.



Above: Meeting with the women of the rural community of Troilo - "talking about ourselves, our emotions, and our daily struggles is also resistance!"

Restore the Future

NHCM leader Patricia Joseph's speech at the July Earth Overshoot Day Rally

"The New Haven Climate Movement is an intergenerational grassroots organization of New Haven area residents pushing for strong action on climate change in New Haven. We fight for government policies and investments that will restore a safe and just future for all. Today our youth action team will share a few words on the impact of climate debt and the importance of climate solutions for the future.

What is climate debt? Climate debt is the recognition that some people, communities, and even nations have contributed disproportionate amounts of GHG emissions, the driving force of climate change. According to climate activist Lidy Nacpil, "[Climate debt] is the conviction that people have equal rights to the earth and space of life. Since some people have exceeded their share of contributions to carbon emissions, they are in debt. They are in debt to the rest of the world and to their communities because they have occupied more than what they are entitled to." I agree, and climate debt embodies more, locally and impacting our youth and future. There's a very real economic and social cost, and New Haven must take responsibility for its annual 120 million dollars in climate debt on 1.2 million tons of carbon emissions.

Climate debt means a stolen healthy future for the youth. The looming, disastrous future will soon be our present for our adult lives. It is us as youth who will have to deal with the sweltering heat and extreme weather as we attend secondary education, enter the workforce, or simply attempt to go on with daily life. In a coastal city such as New Haven, areas prone to flooding will be permanently underwater if the City does not invest in the necessary infrastructure and



reduce GHG emissions. A few weeks ago, there was a flash flood that wreaked havoc in parts of New Haven— imagine the worse outcomes in the future. The future is nearly here, and climate tipping points threaten to create climate chaos. We need to treat the present with as much precaution and pay attention to what we're doing to our planet. Where will people go, and what do we call home? Certainly not a city underwater with fish and other marine life to call neighbors.

We as youth have been given this heavy and unjust burden to speak on behalf of our future. Why must we beg for a healthy and livable planet? Everyone is entitled to breathe fresh air, to live comfortably in predictable climates, and to be ensured a place to call home. The City has no balanced budget intended for climate mitigation and has not addressed its massive climate debt, but the mayor said we have a "once in a generational opportunity" with the incoming federal funds, so it would be very distressing if the city does not invest a significant fraction towards climate projects focused on equitable solutions.

New Haven is indebted to the youth, and our future, and we are here to demand that debts be paid. New Haven is indebted to the youth and our future, and we will keep shouting until promises are fulfilled."

Patricia is a senior at ESUMS Academy and active with New Haven Climate Movement.

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NH/LSCP supports education and sustainable development in Nicaragua and New Haven.

Thank You for your ongoing support!

Make a Plan to Amplify Your Impact

If you would like to extend your support of New Haven Leon Sister City Project to make a lasting impact, there are several gift arrangements to choose from.

Making a meaningful gift is easier than you think. A **gift in your will or trust**, for example, is accomplished by adding simple bequest language to your will - and you'll join others already part of *New Haven Leon: Presente!*

Whether you would like to put your donation to work today or **benefit us after your lifetime**, you can find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and support NHLSCP.

More information at newhavenleon.org on the Give page.



Clean efficient cook stoves help rural families:

- reduce indoor air pollution.
- save on wood.
- and they help you offset your carbon emissions!

Donate now or learn more at newhavenleon.org Carbon Offset Fund



[New Haven/León Sister City Project](http://www.newhavenleon.org) works to promote social justice, education and sustainable development in Nicaragua and Connecticut. For more information see www.newhavenleon.org; www.facebook.com/newhavenleon; email nh@newhavenleon.org; or call 203.562.1607.

[Donate to expand NHLSCP's critical work here.](#)