



## Kids' Radio: All About Food



Recycled pop bottles are repurposed for urban hanging gardens.

In Nandaime, Nicaragua, 30 'Custodians of the Earth' take to the airwaves each week to teach their neighbours about food sustainability. These custodians are kids, ages 6-12, who have learned all about food, nutrition, composting, and the environment from the Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community Centre (CCOAR), Horizon's Nicaraguan partner. The centre promotes youth citizenship around these issues, and also engages kids in the arts (*see sidebar below*).

The kids share their knowledge with their families, helping to increase sustainable local food production. They use their weekly show at the radio station, "La Nandaimeña", to teach their communities how to care for the environment, create

urban gardens and make healthy food choices. Fruits and vegetables come to life as the youth vocally animate these characters in lively exchanges on the nutritional components of food.

During Horizons' recent Educational Tour to Nicaragua, the custodians proudly presented their environmental projects to delegates. These included a kitchen compost project and an innovative urban garden project using hanging plastic pop bottles to grow vegetables. Using this method, "we have grown tomatoes, cilantro, oregano, beets and chilis," they proclaimed.

Poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation are persistent challenges in Nicaragua. In the municipality of Nandaime, 30% of the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day, struggling to earn a decent living and put food on their tables. Nandaime, like most of Nicaragua, has a very young population – 46 percent are below the age of 15, making children and youth vitally important to the process of development.

We asked the children to tell us what they like about the radio program. "I like

giving advice to people to eat healthy," says Grethel, 8. Alexander, 11, is a bit more reflective. "I like inviting community members to see how children organize themselves."

Youth are discovering what it means to be part of efforts to solve problems in their families and communities. It's about supporting sustainable local food production in urban areas through community and family gardening. It's about raising broader awareness about environmental issues and the ways they negatively impact community health and development.

Investing in the next generation and creating these kinds of opportunities for youth is essential to ending poverty and other challenges in Nicaragua and Central America.



## Arts Program Ignites Youth



Ramón Canales, María Aguirre, José Mercado and José Soza (behind) learn trust and teamwork during circus workshops.

At the Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community Centre (CCOAR), the youth of Nandaime, Nicaragua find something that is sadly lacking in their lives. Hope.

Poverty, lack of employment, and

violence make the future seem bleak for youth. But CCOAR is working to change that by engaging, educating, and empowering young people.

It provides fun and challenging programs in art, music, dance, circus, theatre, radio and sports to 80 children and youth ages 8 – 20, along with education on self-esteem, culture and history, human rights, and how to contribute as a citizen.

The arts programs give kids a positive social outlet, and help them build the skills, confidence and enthusiasm they need to take control of their lives.

20 year old María Auxiliadora Palacios Aguirre has been coming to the centre for three years to take part in the dance and circus programs. "When I was little I always wanted to be part of a dance group," she says. "Now I have learned how folkloric

dances are important elements of a community's culture and they need to be kept alive." In addition, says María, "the stilt-walking and circus techniques have shown us that we are capable of doing new things."

María also loves the social aspects of the programs. "These groups are so important because they help us to relate to one another," she says. Larry Gutiérrez, 17, agrees. "I have learned many dance techniques and values like respect, friendship, teamwork and patience. These kinds of spaces are important because they keep us away from drugs and off the streets. This has been a great experience for me ... a great stage in my life."

Public performances in each of the program areas attract thousands of people, let the kids showcase what they do, and encourage others to participate.

## Profile: Doña Esperanza Ordoñez

Doña Esperanza adjusts her stethoscope on her eager patient's belly. The baby's heart-beat has been a bit elusive, but the veteran traditional midwife is confident she'll find it soon enough. "She's playing hide-and-seek today," she laughs, as she tries to reassure the mother-to-be. "Don't worry, though. I can feel that your baby girl is going to be a feisty one."

For the last 17 years Doña Esperanza has been honing her skills attending to pregnant women, new mothers and their children in the southwestern Guatemalan highlands. The 59 year-old mother of six is one of two midwife trainers who will play a major role in Horizons' latest project, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: Transforming Indigenous Lives in Guatemala.

Doña Esperanza and her colleague are in charge of training 40 indigenous traditional midwives in upgraded, culturally relevant maternal, newborn and child health practices. They in turn will train another

25 traditional midwives following the proven train-the-trainer approach. The 1,040 strong cadre of better trained and equipped traditional midwives will fan out across the province of Totonicapán to the benefit of tens of thousands of women, children and their families over the project's four year life span.

Proudly Maya K'iche, Doña Esperanza first began serving the health needs of her communities as a health promoter. She still remembers the first delivery she attended in that role – and how vexing it was to witness the near death of a young mother simply because of a lack of basic health services in her community. She's attended 1,500 births since and is very glad to share her accumulated knowledge with other midwives young and old.

Despite her reserved disposition, Doña Esperanza can't hide her enthusiasm for the project upon which Horizons and our Guatemalan partner, PIES de Occidente



Doña Esperanza Ordoñez

are embarking. "I can't stress enough how much women in Totonicapán need this. I'm honoured to play the role I'm playing as we get the ball rolling."

As if on cue, she finds the baby's heart-beat. "There it is! Healthy and strong, just like her mother," she proclaims in a scene we hope will play out many times over.

## MIGRANT WORKERS Organizations Team Up to Tackle Challenges

Thousands of migrant workers from Mexico and the Caribbean come to Canada each year to work in the agricultural sector. In addition to grueling work, these workers face a number of challenges: culture shock, isolation and poor work-life balance, language barriers and a general unawareness of how to access basic resources. But for those who arrive in Northumberland County, help is at hand.

Horizons, in partnership with Northumberland County, collaborates with organizations in the region to offer a wide variety of services to migrant workers to

address the challenges they face. Here are just some of them:

- We offer free and confidential health and legal clinics in collaboration with the Port Hope Community Health Centre and the Northumberland Community Legal Centre. The clinics run for the duration of the migrants' stay, from June to October.
- Translation services are available to Spanish-speaking migrant workers so they can effectively access services such as hospital emergency rooms, dental clinics, and government offices.
- We organize fun events for migrant workers, including a Welcome Dinner, with free food, music, and dancing, game nights, potlucks, and more. This fall, we will also host a Farewell Dinner for the workers.

For many migrant workers, the social events are the highlight of their time here, providing an opportunity to meet and unwind with community members and other migrant workers. Plus, it gives the community at large an opportunity to meet the workers, find out what they do, and show appreciation for their contributions.



### Q&A

Ruben has been a seasonal agricultural worker in Canada for 11 years.

#### Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Mexico City in a low-income, working class family. In Mexico, I work in hard labour and construction. It doesn't pay well, so I come to Canada every year to work in order to support my family. I have a wife and two sons.

#### How hard is the transition to Canada?

Leaving your family behind is really tough; I really miss my wife and children. The language barrier is a difficult adjustment as well, because I don't speak English.\* It's difficult to go to the grocery store and communicate with people.

#### How has our program helped you?

The health clinic was great. The nurses were very good and they helped me with my medical problem. I'm really looking forward to upcoming events and being able to socialize with other migrant workers. This is my first time working in Northumberland County. So far, it's better than all the other places I've worked at in Canada.

\* Interview conducted in Spanish and translated into English.