



pueblito

Creating a Foundation for Life through Child and Youth Development

BACKGROUND

Primary Colours Project Esteli, Nicaragua

Introduction and Background

With 53% of its population under 18 years of age, Nicaragua is a “young” country. Over 1.6 million Nicaraguans are of school age, yet only about 29% complete primary school, despite initial 80% enrolment in Grade 1. On average, the majority of individuals who make up the poorest sectors of society only obtain three years of formal schooling.

According to the last census (2005), almost a third of Nicaragua’s 6 to 18 years olds are illiterate. This figure does not accurately reflect the real, functional literacy skills or quality of education received by the remaining two-thirds.

Primary Colours

This project builds on the success of previous initiatives (namely, Artworks2!) that focused on the preschool classroom (age 0 to 6). **Primary Colours** aims to facilitate the transition from preschool to first grade and beyond, thus lowering dropout rates in Grade 1 and ensuring that more children complete primary school. It includes:

- Teacher training and supervision
- Introducing a novel, art-based teaching methodology in primary school classrooms
- Workshops for parents and relatives
- Awareness building within the community (exhibitions, conferences, festivals, mural paintings)

Primary Colors provides training to teachers and school counselors who teach at the early primary level (Grades 1 and 2) in 12 public primary schools in the city of Estelí (northern Nicaragua). These teachers will be trained to use an original, art-based classroom methodology, developed by Pueblito’s main counterpart in Nicaragua, FUNARTE. FUNARTE’s proposal is not only pedagogically sound, but incredibly innovative, as it positions creativity as the basis for social and intellectual development and demonstrates how creativity and art can be incorporated into education, despite the surrounding poverty. Art is central to FUNARTE’s proposal and adults and children alike experiment with creative expression through the use of inexpensive, locally available materials (including naturally found clays, plants and flowers).

As they begin to implement this innovative approach to teaching and the curriculum, the teachers are accompanied in the classroom by FUNARTE education specialists, who provide extra support in the education process.

The tangible benefits of this project are:

- Creating a stimulating learning environment that will ensure a smooth transition for students from preschool to the early primary setting;
- Strengthening creativity, critical thinking, and presentation skills in primary school students;
- Promoting self-esteem, self-worth, independence and creativity in children;
- Enhancing the professional skills of primary school teachers and counselors;
- Involving parents in a direct and constructive manner in the education process of their children.

Primary Colours will ensure that public primary education in Nicaragua is meeting the psychological, emotional and social development needs – as well as the academic needs - of young Nicaraguans.

Given that much of a child's education is received in the home, this project will also work with parents and families in order to educate them on how to ensure the psychological, emotional and social development of their children through the use of art in the home and community.

3,004 students in Grades 1 and 2, as well as 98 teachers, 29 school counselors and 360 direct family members (parents of students) will benefit directly from this project. Through the work of the counselors, the indirect benefits will extend to all the primary school students in both public and private schools in the area of Estelí.

Counterpart organization - FUNARTE

FUNARTE, or the *Foundation for Creative Children's Art (Fundación de apoyo al arte creador infantil)*, is a registered, non-governmental, non-profit, Nicaraguan organization, founded in 1989. Since its inception, FUNARTE has promoted constructive social change through art. FUNARTE uses art not only to advocate on behalf of children but more importantly to improve their quality of life and give them a voice in society. FUNARTE organizes and leads myriad activities that involve disadvantaged children, their parents, their teachers, community leaders and members of local government. Beyond an active mural program for almost 1000 children and youth annually located in the cities of Estelí and Managua, FUNARTE also works closely with the community preschool system, local primary schools, teachers colleges and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education to improve the quality of public education. FUNARTE has developed an innovative pedagogical approach to preschool education that uses art as the basis for ensuring that the physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual needs of children in the 0-6 age range are being met, even in the most impoverished circumstances.

FUNARTE's work is sanctioned (but not financially supported) by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education. In fact, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education has taken FUNARTE's pedagogical proposal to all eight of the national teachers colleges and pre-service teachers are now being trained in art and creativity for the classroom. In the near future FUNARTE aims to effect significant improvements to the national curriculum by furthering the reach of their proposal.

FUNARTE – Pueblito Canada Partnership

Pueblito Canada and **FUNARTE** have been partners since 2002 working together to improve the quality of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nicaragua by training rural community preschools teachers in the north of Nicaragua in FUNARTE's arts-based classroom methodology. Two successful projects – ¡ArtWorks! & ¡ArtWorks2! - contributed to the training of over 500 community preschool teachers and cause remarkable advances in the quality of ECE in Nicaragua.

Given Pueblito Canada's dedication to improving the lives of children in Nicaragua and FUNARTE's successful track record, Pueblito and FUNARTE have renewed their partnership for another three years (2009-2012) in order to continue improving the quality of public education in Nicaragua.

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