

Superemos Foundation - "Christine King" Cooperative Report on Estelí projects for September 2002

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October 9th 2002

General

September was a busy month administratively for the programs here because we had to get all the relevant documentation prepared to present to the relevant government offices responsible for non-governmental organizations and cooperatives.

The foundation reports to the Ministry of Government in Managua and has to present each year:

- Its trial balance and balance sheet
- Its income and expenditure account
- A complete list of donations in cash and in kind
- An account of any changes in the membership and the foundation's officers

The cooperative reports to the General Directorate of Cooperatives based in the Ministry of Labour in Managua to which it has to provide the same information as the foundation does to the Ministry of Government. Both the cooperative and the foundation have to render a tax return to the Tax Administration office in Estelí.

All these requirements were satisfactorily met by the administrative staff with the help of Lic. Jose López Hoppington who is the accountant for both the cooperative and the foundation.

September was disrupted slightly by the annual Independence Day celebrations for September 15th.

Donations

In August the programs received an important donation of books toys, games, clothes, medicine and equipment from Fiona Graham and her colleagues in the European Commission in Brussels. The handover of the donation to recipients was completed in September.

The books, toys and games have been handed to the pre-school. The medicine has been entered into the inventory of the pharmacy. We have installed a 220-volt circuit into the school's electrical system so as to accommodate a European manufactured computer and printer sent as part of the donation. The computer will be very useful for training purposes. And the printer is a godsend since the existing printer is on its last legs. The children's clothes that came in the donation have been distributed to people in need among the program beneficiaries. Such donations are an important boost to the morale of the people working in the programs and to the program participants. The effort made by the donors is really very much appreciated.

Fiona Graham and her colleagues in the European Commission also made a cash donation of US\$1,260. The programs also received support in September from Lawrence and Bevin Grylack of Massachusetts and from Osborne Lytle of Illinois. We are very grateful to all these people without whom the many services we offer local people here in Estelí would be impossible to keep up.

Social Work

The timetable for the social work activities continued through September as follows:

Classes for night school students

Mondays & Wednesdays 5.30pm- 7.30pm

Craft skills classes

Saturdays 1.00pm -4.00pm

Mondays & Tuesdays 8.00am - 10.00am

Wednesdays 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Attendance for the classes varied between five and twelve as in previous months. The students are now producing good quality crocheted bags and skirts as well as embroidered shirts and blouses. They are enthusiastic about the extra income this brings them as well as the chance to produce things for their own use and that of their family. At the end of the month the program finally managed to set up an exhibition of the students` work, which they had wanted to do for many weeks but for which the students kept saying they were not yet ready.

In the event all turned out well with everyone admiring the work the students produced. A few items were sold, along with pickles and rice puddings and cakes. This kind of event may sound charming and somewhat irrelevant, but it does make a real difference to the incomes of the people concerned as well as to their sense that they can do something for themselves to better their circumstances.

As usual the social workers took time out during the classes to give brief talks on self-esteem, and advising the young women on coping with problems in their family life.

This month there were no talks given for the women and men in the local prison in Estelí because too many prison staff were taking holiday in September to permit adequate supervision of all the activities. The prison administrators apologised to our social workers for this and had a planning meeting with them for the month of October to guarantee replacement workshops for the workshops lost in September.

Seven classes were given to the women night-class students by the social work team in September. The themes developed were:

- Overcoming and controlling our fears
- The fable of the bee and the fly
- How to advance in life without damaging other people
- Emotional maturity - what is it?
- Why loving relationships break down
- Racism
- Basic principles for young people when they start going out on their own

Attendance to these classes varied between 5 and 10 women.

Health

The pharmacy was able to purchase just under US\$100 of basic medicines of which it had run short thanks to the monthly help we receive from the staff of the Dorchester House Multi-Service Centre.

One of the school teachers Gladys Ruiz who is also a trained nurse, worked on materials for the preventive health workshops. Once the timetable permits she will begin to deliver these to the night school students as well as to the craft skills students.

Dr Ivette Castillo made her monthly visit to the local prison, seeing 18 patients whose medicine was then delivered by the foundation the following day from the stocks in the pharmacy.

Only one visit to the pre-school was made by the paediatrician because the Independence Day holiday fell on one of his scheduled visiting days. He saw 9 children who had minor ailments, mainly chest and throat infections.

The program's psychologist has begun family therapy sessions with parents and children of the pre-school. She has also begun counselling sessions with personnel working on the different programs. On September 6th she coordinated a workshop for children and parents, which was incorporated into a family festival for the families who participate in the pre-school. Only 6 sessions of attention to the children and parents were carried out in September because the Independence Day holidays intervened. A total of 12 children and 6 parents received personal attention apart from the group activities.

Environmental workshop

The environmental workshop handed over four bicycle pumps in September - two in Nueva Segovia near the Honduran border, one in Madriz near the small town of Palacaguina and one to a group of families near Juigalpa on the road to El Rama and Bluefields. A total of fifteen families will benefit from improved access to water through these installations.

The workshop has also begun making simple wood-burning metal stoves, which will incorporate a more economic wood-burning chamber.

Pre-school

A total of 44 children attended class during the month with daily attendance ranging from 30 to 38. The holidays and heavy rains affected attendance, and a number of children were absent for health reasons, mostly respiratory disorders. Three children failed to attend the pre-school in September - 2 for family reasons and 1 for health reasons.

Staff participated in the twice-monthly workshop organised by the Education Ministry to improve training of pre-school staff in Estelí. The educators and care-workers also held two evaluation sessions of their work during which they also began planning their objectives for 2003.

Staff made four home visits in September to follow up un-notified absences by children. For the Independence Day celebrations children and staff worked on decorations for the classrooms and an information board.

Secondary Education

The night classes for women are currently focusing on exams, which begin on October 3rd, and end on October 30th.

The subjects to be set will be Mathematics, English, Physics, and Biochemistry. Students who do not feel ready to sit these exams this year will be able to take them next year in July.

We are still not sure whether the exams will be set locally by the teaching staff here in Estelí under supervision from the local Education Ministry office. Or whether the Education Ministry in Managua will insist on revoking its directive of May this year to return to centralized exams set from Managua. We hope this unsettling uncertainty will not affect our students.

Whatever the outcome of this administrative process, our second graduation ceremony will take place on December 2nd this year. We look forward to seeing another 30 women from among the night class students receive their baccalaureate.

Financial report

The project activities in September were financed as follows

Women's secondary education program

US\$1295 - Fiona Graham and colleagues of the European Commission in Brussels

Pre-school

US\$1412 - De Kalb Interfaith Network & Fiona Graham and colleagues

Health and Social Work

US\$600 - Dorchester House Multi Service Centre

Environmental workshop

US\$453 - Schooner Foundation

Administrative costs for the month were US\$407 financed by a percentage taken proportionally from each of the programs. Special costs of US\$280 for the month included the purchase of replacement parts for the office computer, which broke down at the end of September and the installation of a 220 volt electrical circuit to accommodate office equipment donated by Stephen and Christine Cook of the European Commission in August which involved isolating the existing 220 volt circuit used by the welder in the workshop.