

MERCY SHIPS NICARAGUA

“GARBAGE TO GREENS”

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECT FINAL REPORT



October 2005
León, Nicaragua

Introduction and Key Facts

The Garbage to Greens project was designed to tackle two main problems in the city of León, Nicaragua: malnutrition and large amounts of organic waste. The aim of the project was to collect the organic waste and turn it into compost to be used on vegetable gardens in schools around the city. The students of sixth grade (12 years old) were given the opportunity to learn how to manage a family garden, growing nutritious vegetables using organic methods. The harvested produce was then sold to generate the money required to continue the project into next year at the participating schools.

Five schools from the department of León participated in the project:

Colegio San Jacinto

Colegio San Carlos

Colegio Salzburgo

Colegio Azarias H. Pallais

Colegio Clarisa Cardenas

The students at each school received two classes per week, training them in how to establish an organic family garden. They then had the opportunity to put what they had learnt into practice in the school garden. Students all took the same test at the beginning and end of the project to determine what level of understanding they had before the project began, and what progress had been made.

The total cost of the project was \$8,012.

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Headington School, Oxford

Countryside United Methodist Church, New York

Victory United Methodist Church, New York

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How the project worked



An area of land suitable for the garden was selected at each school. The area was fenced off to protect the garden. The students then began to prepare the ground.



The students began to sow seeds. Organic waste was collected from around the city and prepared for composting.



Our agriculture team taught the students about compost, and then the correct distance for planting was carefully measured out.



The crops began to grow, watched with great excitement by the students who had planted them and cared for them. Pests were soon identified on the plants though.



So the Mercy Ships agriculture team demonstrated organic pest control methods, and the students learned how yellow plastic can be used to trap insects and prevent them from damaging the plants.



At last the crops were ready for harvest and the harvest of vegetables such as aubergine and pipian could begin.



The students sold the crops to teachers and friends and learnt how to manage money. Then at the end of the project they took a final exam to test how much they had learned. The money earned from the sale of the crops is to be invested in continuing the project with school gardens in the next academic year.

Looking to the future

The project was successfully completed in four out of the five participating schools. The land offered for the garden at the fifth school was found to be unsuitable for planting, so while the students still received the classroom training, no crops were grown. The tests taken at the beginning and end of the project show a very good level of understanding was achieved amongst all the participating students; the average result rose from 35% in the initial test to 69% in the final test. Teachers and students in the four schools where crops were grown, harvested and sold have committed to continuing the project and planting new gardens in the future. Mercy Ships Nicaragua's agriculture team have agreed to visit these schools next year.

Acknowledgements

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