

From the Presbytery's trip to Nicaragua: Yamileth and the Managua Dump, La Chureca

On Tuesday, November 2, the members of PMRV's Nicaraguan Mission Team visited Esperanza en Accion (Hope through Action). "Hope through Action" is a Fair Trade organization that provides Nicaraguan artisans with the tools to lift themselves out of poverty by offering technical assistance, consultation, education and practice in calculating a fair wage (something they have never before had an opportunity to do!). Esperanza en Acción also works to connect these artisans to local and international fair trade markets so that they receive a living wage for their work. **The woman who spoke to the group there is named Yamileth, and her personal story is deeply moving.**

The following day Yamileth came again to speak to the group, just before they drove through the Managua dump, called La Chureca. For many years Yamileth lived and raised her four girls in the dump, and the memories are still vivid and painful.

This is her story...



I lived in La Chureca, which is in the barrio of Acahualinca. This barrio has 24,000 inhabitants, over 80 percent of whom live in the dump. Five percent survive on farming, 10% work at jobs, 5% have tiny businesses. The rest recycle plastic, aluminum and whatever else they can find. Each day a green truck comes to dump intestines and tripe from a slaughter house. The people look for small pieces of liver or kidney to cook. They also go through the leftovers of restaurants and markets. **I did ironing, but when there was no business, I had to go to the dump to feed my daughters. I still live very close.**

We want people to know about La Chureca. We gave some of the children cameras so they could take photos of the conditions there. Yamileth began to tear up at this point. **She continued, when the supermarkets would dump rotting meat, we would put guava leaves on it to kill the smell so we could eat it. My daughters were often sick. They were malnourished, with asthma, anemic and infections.** The worst is to see your children in this situation and you can do nothing. It is so desperate. **By faith and my testimony I found a way out.** I didn't have any opportunity to study. Only God helped me. Some of my friends are shocked how I speak now. They think, "She's a doctor. She has 4 girls and 2 granddaughters." **Someone who helped me was the founder of Esperanza en Accion.** I was so scared when they offered me the job. I didn't think I could do it. I had great fear! They said, "You can do it." It is very difficult when you have had no job and now have responsibility and even more difficult to get out of La Chureca. I never thought I could do more than pick up trash.

All the houses are built from plastic, cardboard and scrap wood. About 200 families live directly inside the dump. Now there is a project from Spain. It's very big, and includes concrete homes and jobs for the 200. There is an electric plant and a recycling plant. But there are **an additional 800 families living on the borders of the dump who work inside** and the problem with this project is it does not include the 800 other families. **If they stop people from working in the dump, these families will be unemployed. This is a struggle we have now.**



Dr. John Doty leads the Austin Samaritans in providing a primary school inside the dump. It's called Esperanza School. It is the only place where kids are fed and get shoes and school supplies. But the food is the best thing. It accepts all children, not just those of La Chureca. Now it's safer there. There are 500 to 600 students in two shifts.

There is also Nica Hope, which works with teens and children, teaching them how to do artwork and jewelry from things they find in the dump. It is located outside the dump. The government provides basic food (rice and beans) for the schools, but other donations provide the vegetables. They teach computers and provide some money to the children for their work.

In 1988 there were 90 families in La Chureca; in 1990 19 families; now there are 200 families and it's growing.

More information on the organizations mentioned:

Austin Samaritans is dedicated to improving the human condition in God's Larger World. Through [collaboration](#) with churches, non-profits, and organizations of benevolence, it connects resources & talent to the needs of people in the areas of [health](#), [education](#), and [rescue](#). **It is an** ecumenical organization based in Austin, Texas and supports a school named [Colegio Cristiano Presbiteriano](#) in Managua. **Their website is** www.austinsamaritans.org.

Nica HOPE is a new outreach of Fabretto Children's Foundation to the communities in and around the Managua City trash dump, offering long-term solutions to entrenched poverty through education and practical skills training. Nica HOPE provides increased opportunities for youth and adults from the communities that currently depend on the trash for income and survival. Nica HOPE opened its doors to the community of the Managua City trash dump in February of 2008, receiving a flood of students seeking to expand their minds, skills, and opportunities for the future. With children working in the trash to make little more than \$2 a day, Nica HOPE programs aim to provide education and job opportunities apart from the trash for these youth. **You can buy jewelry made by the children of the dump at their website:** www.nicahope.org

Esperanza en Accion's website is www.esperanzaenaccion.org