



February 2015 Delegation to Nicaragua: David Newman, (Not pictured) Clare Lillis, Rick Heidick, Jim Hunt, Bev Driscoll, Kathy Stutzman (not pictured), Joanne Rosener and DG Karel Weigel

To Schedule a Presentation to your Rotary Club about the Fast for Hope Nicaragua Initiative, contact Joanne Rosener:
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**Fast for Hope - The Nicaragua Initiative.
Creating Systemic Change in a Community**



Fast For Hope. What is it?

Fast for Hope is an ongoing District-wide initiative supported by contributions from Clubs: it differs from Rotary Foundation grants in that it is a District specific project and not a Rotary International project. But, perhaps more specific questions are, “What is happening? How is our money being used? What have we learned?” District 5960 created this concept over 20 years ago, though its definition has changed a bit over the years in response to ongoing assessment and evaluation. With continuing activity and important progress, it seems a good time to do a review of its history, milestones of progress and the future. There is important progress being made as Rotarians in District 5960 work in collaboration with our partners: the staff of Kairos School and the community of El Corozo, Nicaragua. We all have much to be proud of.



Background

Our District takes pride in our history of participating in “Service Above Self” international projects: Rotary Foundation District and Global grants, Group Study Exchange programs, and Global Scholar programs. To extend these efforts and permit the option of participation by all clubs in the District in international service, the idea of a district sponsored initiative supported through individual club member donations was born. This was called Fast for Hope, and to honor the work on poverty, clubs would often serve a very limited meal to signify that in many parts of the world, this is a full day’s food ration. In raising this awareness, we also raised money to help others. Early on a new project was launched each year, but a review of several years’ experience showed these small projects were often not sustainable. Fast for Hope has evolved over time to focus on eradicating poverty at a community level. But, we recognized achieving intended results would require a multiyear commitment beyond the timelines of the more familiar grant supported projects and a broadened scope of endeavor.

In developing this new model, the focus has been on working with people and organizations to build capacity within the community so those who reside there are empowered to take responsibility and determine what is important to them, assigning priorities accordingly. Rotary’s role as a partner is to accompany them and support a local non-profit (Non-Governmental Organization- NGO) as together they build their leadership capacity in solving problems and achieving their goals and dreams.

Of course this work requires patience and perseverance, but our belief that this model will develop skills and experience in the community has begun to materialize as demonstrated by the community’s appointment

of local leaders for each of the 4 committees (or Commissions as they refer to them).

The Role Of Kairos School



Kairos School Staff –Mayquelyn, Sergio, Jennifer

In designing this initiative, it was critical for the District Leadership to find a partner organization on the ground in Nicaragua who understood the language and the culture so they could work directly with the community. Several organizations met the criteria for participation and ultimately Kairos School was selected as a good fit for the partner role: identify needs, prioritize goals (dreams) and begin to identify the major actions that must be taken to achieve their goals.

District 5960

It is important to understand that Rotary as a partner has much to contribute, but we have also had much to learn from Kairos and the

community we accompany. Seeing is believing. To that end, since 2007 13 cultural delegations and 10 planning delegations have visited Nicaragua from D5960. This means over 60 individual Rotarians have participated in this hands on learning. Each of these opportunities has deepened our understanding of the culture, the people, and what daily life is like. It is real time demonstration of: “If you tell me I will forget; if you show me I will remember; if you involve me, I will understand”. Many Nicaraguans live in survival mode, stifled by generational poverty, thwarted by external obstacles of oppression and internal obstacles of dependence and inertia, but we have also learned Nicaraguans have deep reservoirs of ingenuity and capability. As Rotarians we have as much to learn as our Nicaraguan partners!

At the beginning of this description the idea of patience and perseverance was mentioned and was often called to mind during field work. There is an old Information Technology axiom, “Nine women cannot make one baby in one month!” Just adding resources is not always a solution; some things just take time to develop, and so it has been with Fast for Hope. Patience and perseverance in the work of building trusting relationships with the staff of Kairos, the people in the El Corozo community, and other partner organizations including local government entities have coalesced yielding measureable progress. It is being recorded and celebrated! Although tangential to our original purpose, one very positive result of the initiative has been the chartering of a new Rotary Club in the city of Masaya, the Rotary Club of Ciudad Sandino.

With trust established, we were ready to begin putting together a new model of community capacity building using strategy based on three key questions:

What do **you** want? **DREAM**

How will **we** get there? **PLAN**

What do **we** have to do and how will we do it? **IMPLEMENT**

Our process of accompaniment has meant helping **their** leaders succeed, not supplying leadership for them, and it has provided the opportunity for all of us to build on each other's strengths.

The community of El Corozo has articulated its DREAM:

1. The **Road**. The current dirt road is impassable about 6 months of the year during rainy season. The road is key to all other priorities listed below;
2. **Education and literacy**-there is an elementary school in the village; a secondary school is in a nearby community, but in rainy season, children cannot get there and many drop out of school;
3. **Health Care** – access to community health training;
4. **Water and sanitation**-access to potable water and sanitation and hygiene training.

For each of these focus areas a committee was formed with a leader chosen as a respected member of the community. Strategic planning with the four committees of the community, Kairos staff, and District 5960 representatives was begun in 2013. The community was engaged and involved. The community created a plan and a fund to which they all contribute some money as well as their time; all a part of their share of making the dream come true.

In 2014 the community conducted a household survey to better understand current conditions and provide baseline data on which to



Four Commission Chairs- Pedro Pablo, Victor, Remigio, Maria del Rosario

measure progress. There are 102 households in El Corozo with 460 residents. Some of the survey findings follow:

74% of households have a latrine (not indoor plumbing), the remainders have nothing

60% of households travel 1-3 hours per day to haul potable water

29% of household travel more than 4 hours per day to haul potable water

89% of households are willing to contribute small donations to help support the project.



El Corozo Community Meeting

During a planning visit in February 2015, further progress was made when the Mayors of two neighboring towns, Masatepe and Niquihnomo, joined the planning meeting with El Corozo, Kairos staff and District 5960 planning delegation to pledge their support for the road, beginning with surveying the land and government support for construction. In turn the community pledged help with clearing brush from the road side and providing food for survey crew so they could remain in the community for a full day's work rather than leave for a lunch break.

The topographical survey was started on time and has been completed as promised. This important first step begins another milestone of progress. **The road** remains the first priority, but concurrent projects also show progress.



Education and Literacy: Libros por Ninos- (an NGO) a mobile book distribution program visits the community to deliver books to children and the community fund is paying for containers to house the books.

Community based health care: Health care team training is being conducted by Accion Medica Cristiana (an NGO) for members of the community as well as supplying medications and equipment.

Water and Sanitation: Community Hygiene, sanitation, use and water safety program training conducted by Water for Life (an NGO).

These projects are occurring through a District Grant in which 13 club have participated.

Our support in dollars and commitment of both personal time and individual involvement has made a difference in the community today and will for the generations to come. We have helped to create a new future; one based on HOPE!

The Legacy of Fast for Hope

Without minimizing the important contribution being made to people and the community of El Corozo, the legacy of this project from its lessons learned has an even wider reach; it has helped form the planning model for other grants. The August Issue of the Rotarian Magazine contained a feature article on “Street Girls Aid” in District Grant supported project in Ghana, West Africa. And, a third example, a District Grant supported a project in Costa Rica, a collaborative effort with District 5960, the US National Park Service and its Costa Rican equivalent as the “Sister Parks Project.” These projects employed the same protocol-- the Dream, Plan, Implement paradigm-- with each stage of the process involving the community which would be deeply affected by the outcome. As Past District Governor Cathy Smith was quoted in Ghana article, “What if we build relationships before we build “stuff?” Both approaches work well, and they continue to work well in combination.

Both Fast for Hope and the Sister Parks Project are topics covered at the Upcoming District Conference.

