Rainbow Network
Transforming poor communities through Catholic social development programs
— Nagarote, Nicaragua —

...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16
We are a Catholic ministry that serves the poorest of the poor internationally by channeling aid through dioceses, parishes and Catholic missionaries, cost-effectively helping the poor break the cycle of poverty while advancing Catholic evangelization.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church’s spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify him in Heaven and on earth.
Project Synopsis

Description
Subsidize the feeding and nutrition portion of a five-pronged outreach to minister to the needs of poor Nicaraguan families.

Purpose
Use sound Biblical and business principles to fight hunger and malnutrition in poor Nicaraguan communities, while sharing the love of Christ.

Cost
$17,050 is needed to help cover the cost of Rainbow Network’s feeding and nutrition program in Nagarote for an entire year.

Location
Nagarote, a rural community in Nicaragua.

Highlights
- Rainbow Network serves about 42,700 people in Nicaragua each year through its five areas of outreach: health care, education, food, housing and microenterprise.
- All Rainbow Network staff members in Nicaragua are Nicaraguan, which is how they are able to offer employment opportunities to the communities they serve.
- With the help of Cross Catholic Outreach and its benefactors, Rainbow Network is able to feed more than 1,462 children, pregnant women, and at-risk elderly people five to six days a week through its community feeding centers in Nagarote.
- The feeding program helps promote better nutrition in the community by offering training in hygienic and nutritious food preparation.
- Staff members also monitor the height and weight of the children in the feeding program to their nutrition status; those who are underweight despite the increase in food are referred to a doctor to assess overall health and the need for supplementation.
- The program promotes sustainability by helping impoverished families create fruit and vegetable gardens, providing seeds and assistance.
- God is at the heart of everything Rainbow Network does. Through their work they share the love of Christ with those who need it most.
The Need

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Plagued by high unemployment and a low literacy rate, the poor here survive on next to nothing. Very few can afford regular meals, much less educating their children, and owning a solid home with a sturdy roof is considered a luxury beyond their dreams. After all, the average annual income of families living in rural Nicaragua is less than $500!

Before Rainbow Network began working in Nagarote, the people scraped together a living by working as field hands — the only job available for someone with little education and no skills training. Basic services provided by the government, such as health care, were located too far away for the people to use. Children did not attend school because parents could not afford the school supplies, registration fees, and uniforms needed to attend “free” public school. Families often didn’t have enough food, so children would routinely skip meals. This was a community in desperate need of a God-sized solution and the hope of the Gospel. Rainbow Network has worked hard to bring the people both.

Nicaragua’s Poverty

Sandwiched between Honduras and Costa Rica, Nicaragua is home to more than 6 million people. Underemployment is prevalent in this Central American country. It has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world and the third lowest per capita income in the Western Hemisphere.

**Economy:** Though the unemployment rate is 5.6 percent, underemployment is at 46.5 percent. People are often compelled to take jobs they are overqualified and underpaid for because of a shortage of skilled jobs.

**Health:** The infant mortality rate is 21 deaths per 1,000 live births, and life expectancy is about 72 years.

**Poverty:** About 48 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

**Education:** Only 67% percent of the population can read and write.

**Malnutrition:** 22% percent of children under 5 suffer stunted growth due to inadequate nutrition and lack of food.
**Project Description**

**Providing Food and Better Nutrition**

Nagarote was once plagued by high rates of malnutrition, especially among the children. But those numbers are dropping thanks to Rainbow Network’s feeding and nutrition program. With the support of Cross Catholic Outreach and its benefactors, the Nicaraguan mission provides meals to more than 1,462 children, as well as pregnant women and at-risk elderly people in Nagarote.

Hot meals are given out five to six days a week at several locations throughout the community. The food, which is prepared by volunteers, is distributed at schools, feeding centers, and churches. As part of the program, families helped through the feeding centers are given seeds and training so they can start home vegetable gardens to supplement their diets.

The majority of the people helped through the feeding program in Nagarote are children, many of whom used to suffer from hunger and malnutrition but are now thriving. Rainbow Network staff record the children’s weight and height every three months to track their progress.

The results have shown a lot of success. After just a few months in the feeding program the blotchy skin, rust-colored hair, boney bodies, and listless eyes — all symptoms of malnutrition — are replaced with smiling faces and healthy bodies.

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**The Deadly Effects of Malnutrition**
Malnutrition increases the risk of infections such as pneumonia. It also causes stunted growth and birth defects. Several studies have also shown that health as an adult is influenced by nutritional experiences from birth through early childhood.

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“When you ask the doctors in the rural clinics if they treat many malnutrition cases they’ll tell you, ‘Not anymore.’ Before Rainbow Network started the feeding programs in Nagarote, they treated a lot of children with malnutrition. Now they treat fewer and fewer cases.”

Claudio Merisio, International Projects Director, Cross Catholic Outreach
Each Meal Makes a Difference

Just how much of a difference can one meal make? A lot, if you ask Lillian Vallejos. The 22-year-old teacher grew up in a very poor family in rural Nicaragua. It was the free school lunches provided by Rainbow Network that convinced her parents to let her attend school.

With a scholarship from Rainbow Network, Lillian went on to attend high school. Her good grades allowed her to go to college, where she earned a degree in teaching. With her steady salary earned as a public school teacher, she is now able to pay for her younger siblings to attend school. In the afternoons Lillian volunteers her time teaching poor children at an after-school tutoring program supported by Rainbow Network.

For Lillian, the meals offered at her school as a child changed her life. They enabled her to get an education that helped her eventually secure her teaching job and, in turn, help support her family. “I probably never would have attended school if it wasn’t for the feeding program,” Lillian said.

Success stories like Lillian’s are made possible every day through Rainbow Network’s feeding program in Nagarote. And none of it would be possible without the support of Cross Catholic Outreach and its donors.
Meeting many needs

Rainbow Network’s outreach programs go beyond just nutrition and food. With the help of supporters such as Cross Catholic Outreach, they are able to minister to many needs facing the poor of Nicaragua.

**Education**

Rainbow Network offers tutoring and scholarships to children whose parents are too poor to send them to school. With the help of Cross Catholic Outreach and its benefactors, they are also able to provide school lunches to the children.

**Health**

Medical and dental clinics opened and staffed by Rainbow Network offer basic health care to communities who did not have it before.

**Housing**

Together Cross Catholic Outreach and Rainbow Network have built safe, sturdy homes for poor families in several rural communities.
Microenterprise
Rainbow Network provides microcredit loans to entrepreneurial but poor individuals so they can start a small business to generate income to support their families.

Our Ministry Partner
Rainbow Network, known in Nicaragua as Red Arco Iris, is a Christian ministry that specializes in long-term community development programs for Nicaragua. It was started by American couple Keith and Karen Jaspers. With a staff of 65 in Nicaragua (all Nicaraguans), Rainbow Network operates to empower destitute people living in remote communities where basic services for the poor are limited or unavailable. Cross Catholic Outreach is proud to partner with Rainbow Network to support its school feeding and nutrition programs.

Spiritual
Every outreach that Rainbow Network performs is done to share the love of Christ with the people. For example, when they build a house for a poor family they give them a Bible along with their keys.
The feeding and nutrition program in Nagarote is changing lives and transforming the community. Children are no longer sick or malnourished. More of them are getting an education because their parents are motivated by the free lunches to send them to school. Destitute pregnant women and elderly people don’t have to worry about where their next meal is coming from.

Beyond meeting these physical needs, the meals provided through this program are also having a spiritual impact. Over and over the Bible reveals that tending to the poor’s physical needs, such as hunger, is of the utmost importance to God and an effective way to advance his kingdom.

John the Apostle implores believers of the early Church not to love others with “words or tongue” but with “actions” (1 John 3:18). His message here is clear: We ought to show others the love of Christ through acts of charity.

Won’t you join us in supporting this important program? Together we have the opportunity to feed the hungry as Christ commanded. As we meet the physical needs of some of the poorest people in Nicaragua, we minister to their spiritual needs as well by sharing the love of Christ, the Bread of Life.

A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Proverbs 22:9

Our Promise to You!
Proceeds from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred during the current calendar year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.