

Pontis Nicaragua Annual Report 2018

Executive Summary and Update



Date of Report: March 2019

PONTIS, INC, OPERATING AS PONTIS NICARAGUA is a Christian Development NGO working to overcome multi-generational poverty in rural Nicaragua through the development of sustainable small farms and farm related businesses. Pontis was established in 2000, first visited Nicaragua in 2003, completed the planning and testing phase in 2008, moved to Nicaragua in 2011, and began full implementation in 2012/13.

OVERVIEW AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Pressing on Through Perilous Times

2018 started out strong with 5 new Pontis trained technicians in the field, a new training location in Siempre Viva, Tuma-La Dalia, and a prospective expansion into Alta Gracia on the Island of Ometepe. We had 88 students, 8 classes being conducted per month, 78 farms under technical advisement, 76 manzanas (132 Acres) in production and under supervision.



Then There Was April

In April, hundreds, then many thousands of students, business men and women, campesinos, and other citizens erupted in protests against the current governmental regime. The tipping point came when the government failed to respond to a major ecological disaster, a devastating wildfire in the

Indio Maiz Biological Reserve, and more prominently, moved to significantly increase social security taxes while reducing benefits without following an open democratic process. The protests were met with aggressive repression from both official and unofficial governmental contingents resulting in numerous assassinations and imprisonment in large numbers. Citizens and resistance groups blockaded cities to limit access by government forces and to force the nation to a halt in order to amplify their voice.

Many Missions and Aid Organizations Left Nicaragua, but NOT PONTIS.

Those dependent on visiting teams were hit hard. Tourism came to a screeching halt. Since Pontis is not visitor dependent, and because we have developed a competent staff in the field living among the people, Pontis was able to continue, and aspects of the work even accelerated.

Blessed to be in the Food Business

In times of deep distress, what better industry to be involved in than the food business? Even if reduced to a barter economy, food is a precious and marketable commodity.



“We Are Here to Stay”

In June we made our way through the protest and government paramilitary blockades to visit our respective training sites and to assure them that we are here to stay and would stand by them through thick and thin.

Activity/Productivity Measurements

	Beginning 2018	End 2018	Current (March 2019)
Training Locations	3	2	8
Students in Training	88	69	106
Acres in Production	133	160	91
Farms Under Supervision	78	66	69

500 Certificates of Completion have been awarded since 2013 for students completing one of our four available small sustainable farm modules and 5 for the Certified Agricultural Technician training program.

Farm Related Enterprise

We have begun a water well drilling business and an agricultural products distributing business that will employ our program trainees in farm related enterprises. We are the sole Nicaraguan distributor of a proven organic fertilizer made from grocery store waste in Seattle, WA (www.wiserg.com).

Family Financial Impact

The original pastor/rice farmers with whom we began with on Ometepe were making about \$650 per year from their rice crops. With our training and provision of new seed, they doubled and tripled their production in the following season. Our Agronomists and Technicians now estimate that a typical family with Pontis training and technical assistance can produce an annual disposable income of \$2,500 - \$3,000 per year on 7 acres. Our goal is to reach the poorest 1/3 of the island's 30,000 population with this program over the coming years.

Pontis' Work is Valued by Others

Pontis works collaboratively with other like-minded organizations such as Grow-Nicaragua of Kentucky on Ometepe and NeoFund of Oregon in Tipitapa. Werkhof Darmstadt e.V., a German NGO, requires all their loan recipients on Ometepe to be actively engaged in the Pontis training program to qualify for funding. We are empowering the poor to access other resources beyond our own.

Financials

2018

Income:	\$154,270	Expenses:	\$134,880
		Operations:	\$116,190
		Management:	\$ 18,000
		Fund Raising:	\$ 690

2019 Budget:	\$180,000
Beginning Balance:	\$ 31,800
Income to ate:	\$ 29,420
Combined Funds to Date:	\$ 61,630
Future Funds Mortgage Asset:	\$ 22,500
Required to Meet Budget:	\$ 95,870

Pontis Impact on a Personal Level



From the mountain community of Nueva Esperanza, perhaps the most profound expression of gratitude came from Deyvin Brenes who, after saying that the Pontis training had helped him make his farm more productive and more profitable, also said, “Thank you for helping me to learn and to become a different person.”



At a recent Women’s Dinner in Nueva Esperanza, our dear friend Beatriz came to our Pontis women and said, “We have been in this community for eleven years. Since you began to work with us about five years ago, you have never abandoned us, and we have not felt alone. You have never left us in good times or bad.”

On La Isla de Ometepe - Nataniel (center) showed us his wonderful plantain plantation recently. His neighbor’s farm was ruined by a pervasive fungus but Nataniel’s stood healthy and productive, in part



because of the practices and products (organic fertilizer, for example) that he had received through Pontis.

Loan recipients like Juana Luquez and her family are prospering because of donors who have empowered them. Juana is shown here with Vilgenza, and her sons Elton and Carlos who are Pontis Students, and Edwin.

