

Esperanza en Acción (Hope Through Action) Fair Trade Organization

Esperanza en Acción, ("Hope through Action"), is an innovative non-profit organization that has created a model of social entrepreneurship to improve the lives of Nicaraguan artisans through fair trade. Our mission is two-fold:



- To economically empower Nicaraguan artisans to lift themselves out of poverty through fair trade and to connect them with fair markets both in Nicaragua and the United States.
- To empower people of the "First World" through economic justice education to help transform our global economic system into one that is fair for ALL people.

The need for strategies to reduce poverty and create economic opportunities is imperative in Nicaragua, the second most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere. Under- and un-employment is 70%, and the average family income of approximately \$90 a month covers only one-fifth of the total needed to purchase the basic basket of food and supplies that is required each month to survive. Almost 30% of the population is

undernourished, 45.1% live on less than one dollar a day and nearly 80% live on less than two dollars a day.

Nicaraguan artisans find themselves in this same dire situation and have few opportunities for improvement. Many artisans inherit the knowledge of their artwork from their families yet have no training in running or managing their own business. This and other factors such as limited access to markets, transportation and low education levels make them susceptible to exploitation in commercial exchanges. It is common for Nicaraguan artisans to receive as little as 5-10% of the fair price for their work.

Esperanza en Acción works directly with Nicaraguan artisans to help them strengthen their small businesses by providing technical support, quality consultations as well as education and practice in calculating a fair wage. *Esperanza en Acción* also supports these artisans by purchasing their work at a fair price and connecting them to fair markets both nationally



and internationally. The result is a newfound hope and opportunity for artisans who are struggling to lift themselves out of poverty as *Esperanza en Acción* offers access to the tools they need for career development and long-term economic stability. This unique form of development provides a 'hand up' and not a 'hand out'.

Esperanza en Acción works with 30 different groups of artisans, the majority of whom are located in the rural areas of Nicaragua where the need is greatest. We are helping to change the lives of approximately 1000 people with this model of economic development through fair trade. These artisans make beautifully handcrafted pottery, pine needle baskets, bamboo baskets, soapstone carvings, paintings, weavings, dishes, jewelry, cards, animal whistles and more. We also promote the efforts of a worker owned sewing cooperative started by Hurricane victims and organic coffee growers struggling to support themselves and their families.



To connect these artists with fair markets, we have established a small Fair Trade Shop in Managua (the only fair trade store in Nicaragua) and we send the artisans' work to the U.S. for stateside sales.

Esperanza en Acción works to facilitate cross-cultural understanding between consumers in the "First World" and artisans in the developing world. Our work is based upon an interactive partnership between Nicaragua and the U.S.; only by

working together can we effect positive change. Nicaraguan artisans achieve economic stability through the commitment of U.S. consumers to purchase fairly traded goods. In turn, citizens from the developed world are empowered to work for a just economy through their knowledge of the work and lives of these Nicaraguan artists and their struggle for dignified work.

Our mission and work with artisans in Nicaragua is made possible by the support of individuals, community groups and communities of faith. We continue to thrive through these connections and are always in need of new support to continue our work.

Please join us!

How you can support our mission:

- Host a fair trade sale in your community, home, or church
- Share the story and mission of *Esperanza en Acción* with your friends and family
- Donate to support our work and our growth
- Educate about fair trade through an economic justice education workshop in your community or church
- Sponsor the work *Esperanza en Acción* through your church or community organization
- Support Fair Trade through your personal choices and purchases

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