**Nicaragua: Poverty & Solutions**

**Total time: 50 Minutes**

**Objectives**

Students will:

* Become aware of what the international community defines is extreme poverty.
* Compare how much students live on per day compared to the majority of those in Nicaragua.
* Compare the minimum wage in Texas to the minimum wage in Nicaragua. Compare wages of various jobs in Nicaragua.
* Discuss solutions and types of programs that break the cycle of poverty.

**Plan**

* Opening Activity: 15 Minutes
* Discussing Solutions: 10 Minutes
* Gathering the Facts: 20 Minutes (Video 12 minutes, Discussion 8 minutes)
* Making a Difference: 5 Minutes

**Opening Activity (15 minutes)**

Show Intro slide on Nicaragua – location

*Poverty Discussion:*

**1.** Ask each student to individually calculate how much they spend in a day. Students should

consider daily expenses such as food and transportation, regardless of who pays for it—

themselves or their parents. Ask them to also estimate other expenses, such as clothing and

recreation. You could mention that it costs their family money to live in house/apartment, use water, electricity, etc. They probably can’t estimate this, but this gives them an idea that how much they spend is even more than their estimate.

**2.** Ask for a few volunteers to say how much their estimated daily expenses amount to.

**3.** Tell the class that 80% of the Nicaraguan population lives with less than $ 2 a day and 45% live with less than $ 1. 1 in 5 people in the world live on less than $1 per day. This is how the

international community defines extreme poverty. Show PP slides while discussing – slide with 80% mentioned and with statistics about school.

**Ask students:**

• If you had only $2 per day to spend, how would you spend it? If you had only $1 per day to spend, how would you spend it? Students talk about priority being food, you can discuss that if they spend their $1 or $2 on food, where do they live?

(Statistics about Nicaragua from: <http://habitatglobalvillage.ca/tripschedulec235.php?PJID=401>)

*Wages Discussion:*   
**1.** Ask student if they know how much minimum wage is in Texas. Answer: $7.25 per hour. Have students calculate if a person works 40 hours a week for 4 weeks, how much does he/she make that month? Answer: $1160.   
**2.** Have students look at the minimum wage grid for Nicaragua. This table shows the monthly minimum wage salary for various jobs. The number is in Córdobas, Nicaraguan’s currency, have students convert to dollars in dollar column. 1 Nicaraguan Córdoba = .04 US Dollar.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Profession** | **Monthly Wage in Cordobas** | **Monthly Wage in Dollars** |
| Farmer | 2,004.16 | 80.17 |
| Manufacturing Industry | 2,746.96 | 109.88 |
| Tourism Industry (restaurant, hotel, commerce) | 3,747.16 | 149.85 |
| Arts, Crafts | 2,349.55 | 93.98 |

Students will observe the drastic difference between a month’s wage in US vs. in Nicaragua. In the absence of other job opportunities, people resort to jobs with long hours, low pay, and tough working conditions.  
**Ask students:**• What are differences in pay between occupations in Nicaragua? How does the minimum wage in Nicaragua compare to that in US?

**Discussing Solutions (10 minutes)**

Directions:

1. (Show PP slide with pics from Pulsera Project) Explain to the class that there is a non-profit organization in Nicaragua that is focused on empowering young Nicaraguan artisans through the sale of their colorful handwoven bracelets (“pulseras” in Spanish) in the United States. Through pulsera sales almost 100 artisans are empowered through sustainable fair-trade employment. A full-time pulsera artisan makes about 150 pulseras a month, which comes out to about $187/month. They can set their own hours, work from home, spend time with their families, among numerous other positive social benefits.

**Ask students:**

Compare the average salary of the different professions in Nicaragua to what a pulsera artisan makes. Does a Pulsera artisan make more or less?

1. Workers in the Pulsera Project are paid about $1.25 up-front for each pulsera, and then and all proceeds from pulsera sales are then reinvested in different programs that focus on breaking the cycle of poverty in Nicaragua---including scholarships, micro-loans, shelter support for kids living on the street, workers rights advocacy, and more.

**Gathering The Facts (20 minutes)**

Directions:

1. Explain that the class will be watching a short video about Nicaragua and how the Pulsera Project has helped people get off the street, get paid a fair wage, get an education and more.

**Watch**

1. Show Color the World video to the class (12 minutes). Have students complete worksheet while watching video. Discuss the questions afterward.

Spanish subtitles (<http://vimeo.com/52175672>), English subtitles (<http://vimeo.com/51618703>)

**Answer Key Película: Color the World** Contesta las siguientes preguntas

1. How did La Pulsera Project start? In 2009, A group of 13 people went to Nicaragua for adventure and community service, when they left a shelter for street they were helping, some kids gave them pulseras to say thank you. They had the idea that they could sell the pulseras in the US and send money to the shelter for street kids in Nicaragua
2. Where was the Pulsera Project’s help really needed? Support the kids once they left the shelter, safe sustainable alternative to their life
3. Mercedes Altimirano said there are different kinds of jobs, but what is the issue? There are not good salaries
4. What are Zonas Francas? Factories that have people make clothes for the US
5. What are the problems working at Zonas Francas? They pay poorly, you have to work all day from 5-6am to 9, 10, 11 at night. You can’t study, spend time with your family
6. Why are these Zonas Francas able to get so many employees? Because there are no other alternatives.
7. What alternative has the Pulsera Project given Mercedes and other artisans that make pulseras for the Pulsera Project? She can stay with her kids while working
8. According to Juan Carlos Mayorga, what is one the most important things for people to have in Nicaragua? education
   1. Why is it important in breaking the cycle of poverty? You can get a good job, get paid more
9. How might these peoples’ lives be different if they didn’t work for the Pulsera Project? They might have to work for a Zona Franca, they then might not get to spend time with family, work long hours, experience low wages, not have the opportunity for an education.

**Further things for discussion after the video:**

1. **Zonas Francas:** The Zonas Francas fall under the manufacturing category for minimum wage, and those numbers can actually be pretty deceiving. According to Colin Crane, co-founder of the Pulsera Project, most everyone he has heard of working in Zona Francas works at least 10 hours a day, usually six days a week. One of his friends in the co-op (Luis David, who you know from Color the World) was actually fired from a Zona Franca for taking a day off to marry his wife. With those hours, many zone franca workers actually make a decent annual income, but they have no life outside of their work.
2. **Work Week:** As far as he knows the minimum wage numbers are hourly no matter how many hours are worked a week. The "official" work-week in Nicaragua is 48 hours, although many people in this industry and in the farming industry work easily 70-80 hours a week. Many of the zone francas have incentive programs that encourage workers to stay longer hours in exchange for a small increase in rate. Many workers need to take advantage of these programs to support their families, but then end up being away from them all the time, as Luis David and Betzayda narrate in Color the World video.

**Making a Difference (5 minutes)**

Directions:

1. Show PP slide talking about Pulsera Sale. Explain to the class that starting on Monday, the HS Spanish Club and HS Spanish Honor Society will be selling pulseras in the cafeteria for $5. All money goes towards the Pulsera Project. Every 15 pulseras sold covers the cost of sending a pulsera artisan to University for a month. Many self-employed and run their own stands in the markets of Nicaragua or on busy streets of tourist cities like Granada. Students efforts are helping----before the Pulsera Project began purchasing pulseras from the families, many would run their own stands in markets and only sell about 10 pulseras a week. Because of the continuing efforts of students and teachers across the country doing pulsera sales, the Pulsera Project is able to buy hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of pulseras a month from these different groups. This makes a huge difference!

**Some Discussion Questions are from The Face of Poverty Lesson and Mapping Out Solutions from** [**www.teachunicef.org**](http://www.teachunicef.org)

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