

**Annual Report: Fall 2007**  
**The Harvard Project for Sustainable Development**



**Mission Statement**

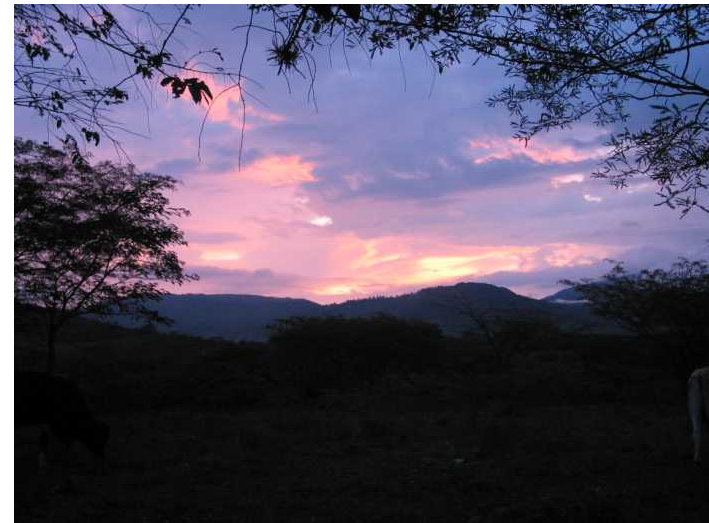
Fighting inequality and injustice in the world by:

Connecting members of the “developed” and “developing” parts of the world;

Building relationships based on equality, trust, and partnership between these groups;

Working together on important development issues and bringing resources to help execute important projects to the highest possible standard; and

Raising awareness of development issues at Harvard and beyond.



A beautiful sunrise in El Limón

## Letter to Our Supporters

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your generosity and support over the past year! The Harvard Project for Sustainable Development (HPSD) has had an enormously successful first year.

We have *a strong, committed, and growing membership*. With more than 30 members and interest from more than 150 incoming first years at Harvard alone, we are looking forward to an extremely successful upcoming year.

We are *advocating for international development issues at Harvard and beyond*. Our major spring event “The War On Poverty” was a tremendous success and had great attendance.

The *generous support that we have received has allowed us to do a number of essential projects in our partner community of El Limón in Nicaragua*. We raised more than \$3000 over the year and did several important projects including building a community kitchen and installing a bookcase and blackboard in a classroom, to name a few. We were able to distribute more than 20 suitcases of supplies with donated supplies from our supporters.

We ran *an extremely successful first trip to Nicaragua*. Between May 28 and June 9, 16 of our most committed members traveled to Nicaragua. We accomplished our goals of locating a partner community and learning a great deal. We will return next year at least once with the hope of doing even more.

We have an ambitious plan for the upcoming year and hope that we can count on your continued support. On behalf of the entire organization, thank you so much for all that you have already done. Let us walk together and work to improve conditions around the world today for a better tomorrow. Thank you!

In peace,

Eric Meyerowitz  
Co-President

Toby Norman  
Co-President

The HPSD membership worked tirelessly throughout the year on a number of important events and projects

### **The War On Poverty**

On Friday April 20, 2007, the HPSD ran a forum on international development called “The War On Poverty.” It featured a keynote address by Andrew Marx of Partners in Health and six presentations from groups at Harvard College working on various international development issues

The event was run during prospective student weekend at the college and almost 100 students attended. At the end of the student weekend, more than 150 interested incoming freshmen signed up to be involved in 2008 with HPSD.

### **Fundraising**

During the months of March and April, the HPSD ran a major letter campaign. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we raised almost \$3,000. *Every cent of the money raised* went to funding our projects in Nicaragua during our trip in May and June.



## *Education and Development*

The group put in a great deal of effort into preparing for our trip to Nicaragua. We prepared on a number of levels including studies of history, philosophy, economy, and culture.

### **Avoiding Paternalism Workshop**

In early May, Saulo Araujo of Grassroots International led a workshop for all of the students going to Nicaragua. The idea of the workshop was to discuss how to build relationships with community members based on trust, equality, and mutuality rather than money or power.

### **Carla's Song**

Carla's Song is a critically acclaimed movie about Nicaragua during the US backed Contra War in Nicaragua. In mid-April, we showed this movie to the HPSD membership. It is a piece that gives a real sense of what life was like in Nicaragua during the 1980s. Much of the poverty and conditions seen in this work of art still exist today. Also, much of it takes place in Estelí, the closest city to our partner community of El Limón.

### **History**

At weekly meetings, students learned about the history of Nicaragua to give them a broader understanding of the people and the country they were about to visit.

### **Other Preparation**

Students collected material donations and packed more than 20 suitcases filled with supplies to distribute while in Nicaragua. These donations were given to several family oriented non-profit organizations with a focus on children's groups to be distributed by them.

## *The Trip*

Between May 28 and June 9, 2007, 16 of our members traveled to Nicaragua on our first trip as an organization. During that time they lived in home-stays in the community of El Limón. All members learned a great deal during the trip and at the same time each, giving up two weeks of their vacation plus countless hours of preparation, did a great deal of good.



Members of the HPSD trip to El Limón gather in the airport in Managua on the last day of the trip

### **The Community: El Limón**

Our partner community of El Limón is located outside of the city of Estelí in Northern Nicaragua. It is a community with more than 200 members. El Limón has a pre-school and a community center. There is no electricity in the community and the water coming to the houses now comes at a cost that is not sustainable. The people are wonderful and greeted the members of HPSD with open arms and open hearts.

## Building Relationships

During the trip students lived in groups of two or three in home stays where they spent as much time as possible with their host families. The goal was to build relationships grounded in equality. Students worked side-by-side with their host families and exchanged stories, jokes, and tears.



Community members decorated the community center to welcome the group

## The Census

One of the accomplishments of the HPSD during the trip was the completion of a much-needed census of the community. The census is a valuable community resource that the community can use when it is executing and soliciting projects and for day to day issues that arise, too. Additionally, engaging in this project was excellent experience for HPSD members since surveying for needs-assessments is an important skill. It was a great way to learn about the community and exchange dialogue with the community. The community leaders were thrilled to receive such a complete census at the end of the trip.

## Visiting Schools

HPSD members also volunteered at three schools during the trip where they taught lessons to the students. They worked alongside teachers with students from pre-school and primary school. The conditions in the schools were difficult and none of the schools had sufficient materials. The pre-school in El Limón was without a chalkboard and bookcase. Trip members decided to pay for the construction of a chalkboard and a bookcase for the El Limón pre-school and materials (paper, pens, pencils, notebooks, etc) that had been brought down were left in all three schools.



HPSD members work with young students at the pre-school in El Limón. The arts and crafts day with the students was an important aspect of the trip for many of the members and allowed for great interaction between the children and the HPSD membership

## Local Community Visits and Outreach

Trip members visited nine other local communities close to El Limón to learn from as many people as possible about the politics, the culture, and the problems facing the region. Basics needs assessments evaluations were done for each of the communities. We will be working with this information as we plan future involvement in the region around El Limón.

## Learning

A major aspect of the trip was learning. We believe that in order to build relationships based on equality we need to create exchanges with community members founded in mutuality and partnership. During the trip there were a number of organized events which were scheduled to help us learn as much as possible about the culture, the community, and the people of El Limón. We met with the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Estelí to talk about some of the general needs of the region and learn in what way they felt we could best operate in our work. We met with community leaders of another community called Chacraseca in a forum to learn about projects that have been done in their community and ways that we could work to achieve similar successes and try to avoid some of the mistakes. Additionally we met with Witness for Peace, an agency in Nicaragua that focuses on how US policy affects Nicaragua. We learned a great deal from these meetings and are trying to implement this into our vision, mission, and mode of work.



The HPSD met with the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Estelí to discuss issues relating to our work in Nicaragua

## The Kitchen

Early in the trip the members of HPSD met with one of the community's elected committees which helps advocate and guide the community of El Limón by working with projects that benefit the people. We discussed what projects were of the most necessity for the community. They told us about their community kitchen and showed us the condition that it was in. It was about to fall down with very weak walls full of termites and holes. Together we decided to build a new kitchen in the community. The community kitchen serves a number of important functions for the community. First of all, the students in the pre-school often receive a meal from the kitchen from local families who volunteer there. Additionally, it is a source of income for the community which can host events in the nearby community center and serve food. The community relies on this sort of fundraiser to be able to fund other important projects in the community.

HPSD sponsored and worked with community members on the construction of a new kitchen. HPSD and community members partnered every bit of the way during the trip, purchasing the materials together and doing the actual construction. It was a positive experience for all and was another means for fostering interaction between trip members and community members.



HPSD members work side by side community members on the construction of the community kitchen

## **The Next Step**

As we begin this new academic year we move forward with great anticipation and excitement. We believe that we can do a great deal of good through our work, which we have begun this past year. We are planning a year with a number of workshops, fundraisers, and trips. Some of the things that we are doing include:

***Expanding our student and resource base responsibly***, so we can improve our ability to create sustainable projects, and increase our impact on campus

***Forming a committee with Nicaraguans*** to try to ensure that we make decisions that really come from a partnership. This committee will advise us on our work and projects.

***Increasing our preparation*** so that we are even better prepared on our next trips. This will include running a number of workshops for our membership.

***Running two trips to Nicaragua this year*** to provide more of our membership with the best opportunities and experiences that we can.

***Preparing for several major fundraisers*** so that we can continue to make a difference in our partner community and around the world.

Thank you so much for your support and your commitment to the cause of justice around the world! We look forward to working with you more over the course of this next year and beyond.



## **GET INVOLVED:**

*Learn about events, meetings, and volunteer with us.*

If you are interested in working directly with us, email us at [hpsd@hcs.harvard.edu](mailto:hpsd@hcs.harvard.edu) to learn more about how you can get involved and to find about events, meetings, and trips.

*Become a donor.*

Our donors make all of our projects possible. We thank all of our donors for their generosity. If you can make a gift, please visit <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/hpsd/> to learn more. Checks can be made out to The Harvard Project for Sustainable Development and sent to

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