

Nicaragua
June 18, 2008

Global Links' fifteenth container for the year will benefit a hospital in Matagalpa, Nicaragua – and is our fifth container to Nicaragua in 2008.

Global Links executive director Kathleen Hower, and program officer Patti Skillin, visited Matagalpa in October 2007 and found an inspiring team working together to improve the health of their region in the face of great challenges. Matagalpa is the second most populous department in all of Nicaragua, with a population of more than 625,000, yet due to outdated statistics and health policies, it is assigned the second lowest health budget in the country. This causes critical shortages of personnel, equipment and supplies throughout the department. Adding to the budgetary difficulties, it is a largely rural population with poor infrastructure, so physical access to health clinics can be very difficult.

This shipment was designed to benefit the main departmental reference hospital in the capital city of Matagalpa, as well as four strategically chosen rural health centers. Improving health care in these four rural clinics will make primary care more accessible to those living in some of the remotest areas of their department. The rural clinics received very basic materials, such as gynecological exam tables, scales, blood pressure units, oto-ophthalmoscopes, thermometers, and a few beds and gurneys. These basic materials will help to improve their diagnostic capabilities, and give patients more comfortable places to sleep when overnight observation is necessary.

The hospital, on the other hand, offers many more specialized services since it is a departmental referral hospital, and received some more specialized equipment. They prioritized three specific areas -- physical therapy, laboratory, and labor and delivery -- and Global Links was able to help them in each. For the physical therapy unit, which is the only public physical therapy unit in all of Matagalpa, we were able to include two large hydrocollators, four transcutaneous electric nerve stimulators, and a large physical therapy table as well as several boxes of rehabilitation exercise materials.

In the laboratory, they were particularly concerned with improving their pathology department. They do approximately 500 surgeries a month at this hospital, and as many as 80% of those surgeries require a biopsy analysis. To help with the analysis, we were able to provide the hospital with a specialized pathology microscope. In addition, we were able to provide the hospital with a fully functional ultrasound machine. They attend over 500 births a month in this hospital, and it is one of the only public health facilities in Matagalpa to even offer ultrasounds, so the machine will be used frequently. The local health authorities' top priority was improving maternal and infant care in the region, and Global Links was proud to be able to contribute in such a significant way to that goal.