

Nicaragua
April 6, 2007

Global Links sent out container #8 of the year on Friday April 6th. This container, number 285 since the organization's beginning, will go to the northern autonomous region of Nicaragua along the country's northern Atlantic Coast.

This container will benefit a Polyclinic and Hospital Nuevo Amanecer in the town of Puerto Cabezas, which Global Links staff visited last year. Puerto Cabezas is a beautiful and culturally diverse area on the coast, which makes providing health care more challenging. There are five distinct languages spoken in the region due to the different ethnic groups that make up the local population (Miskito, Sumu, Rama, Creole English, and Spanish), and doctors, usually not from that area, rely on local nurses to translate for them. In addition, many furnishings have become rusted and in need of replacement due to the harsh sea air. This area was active area during the Contra war and the hospital itself is an old refugee camp.

The 122-bed hospital was in the process of building a new maternity ward during Global Links' visit in 2006, in which they hoped to place 22 beds. On this container we were able to provide them with 20 beds and mattresses, five gurneys, three gynecological exam tables, and four boxes of high grade surgical instruments, in addition to some standard hospital furnishings and surgical supplies.

This container will also benefit the Polyclinic, a very busy out-patient clinic serving the 100,000+ population of Puerto Cabezas. Their primary needs were for basic office furnishings (we saw nurses sitting in chairs with broken seats and using cardboard boxes as filing cabinets). We provided them with desks, chairs, filing cabinets, and basic medical

supplies and equipment, including nebulizers, blood pressure units, and ophthalmoscopes.

Also of note is that we were able to fulfill a very specific request for a brand new fetal Doppler in the local Casa Materna, thanks to a generous contribution made by a local Pittsburgh donor.

Finally, we were able to contribute essential equipment to the Polyclinic's physical therapy department – a physical therapy table, a whirlpool/hydrotherapy unit, 2 stationary exercise bicycles, 2 weight machines, and 10 boxes of rehabilitation supplies and equipment. Formerly, this area held only a few bicycles, one weight lifting unit, and some parallel bars, yet this region has significant physical therapy needs because of the increasingly hazardous lobster diving practices. Lobster is one of the main industries along the Atlantic Coast and many local men put themselves at great risk diving to increasing depths with outdated scuba equipment. Many men make anywhere from 15 to 20 dives a day (the U.S. Navy recommends doing no more than 3 dives a day - with the proper equipment). The local hospital houses one of the only hyperbaric chambers in all of Nicaragua, but not all divers are fortunate enough to make it there in time. Many local men are now permanently crippled, walk with a limp or have limited use of certain limbs. Supporting the local physical therapy unit was a key aspect of this Global Links donation.