

**Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Pro Alianza Denominacional
CEPAD**

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Delegate Information Packet

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About CEPAD

The Council of Protestant Churches in Nicaragua (CEPAD) is a non-governmental, Christian organization founded in December of 1972, just days after an earthquake destroyed Managua. The initial efforts of CEPAD were aimed at providing emergency relief such as food and shelter to earthquake survivors. Once CEPAD's founders saw the impact that protestant denominations working together could have, they decided to continue working in the following ways: (1) a council of protestant churches to collaborate together, (2) a disaster relief agency, and (3) a development organization (its core work).

1. A Council of Churches

CEPAD's General Assembly is comprised of representatives from 28 protestant denominations. The vernal assembly meets bi-monthly to participate in leadership training, Biblical reflection, analysis of current events, and to receive updates on the state of CEPAD's work in Nicaragua.

2. Disaster Relief

When natural disasters affect Nicaragua, CEPAD continues to act as a vital, internationally-respected channel for humanitarian relief and aid to disaster survivors.

3. Development Work

Leadership Development:

- **Community Leaders:** Leaders in the community receive training from CEPAD in leadership and community organization so they can develop new resources and work with the local government to achieve their goals. Leaders create a formal committee to identify needs and create strategies to meet them. In each five-year period, we train more than 250 leaders who advocate for infrastructure projects, such as road repair, electricity, and communal wells, among other projects. These committee members also serve as main points of contact for CEPAD.
- **Youth Leadership:** Youth who participate in CEPAD's programs learn skills such as public speaking, leadership, and care for the environment. They play sports, create art, and develop self-esteem. They receive training to identify children at risk for violence in the home, drug and alcohol use, and low school achievements so that they receive special attention.
- **Domestic Violence Protection:** Violence against women is the number one crime in rural Nicaragua. CEPAD teaches women in our partner communities about their rights and gives them tools to escape violent homes and help their friends and family members to do the same.

Women's Entrepreneurship Program:

CEPAD trains women on how to analyze business opportunities, healthy investing, and keeping an accounting records. These women then receive a seed fund to start their own business and pay back their loan to a community bank so they can have a revolving fund to involve more women in the future. Some of the businesses they open include: bakeries, corner stores, tailors, and more!

Food Security and Care for the Environment (Organic Farming):

CEPAD works with small farmers to increase food production, improve economies, and protect natural resources. We promote organic techniques and train farmers with less than five acres to make their own fertilizer, diversify crops, avoid chemical pesticides, and use water efficiently. Each farmer then teaches five other community members as disciples so that knowledge is shared. In three years, farmers transition from growing only staple crops like beans and corn to producing up to 25 varieties of fruits, vegetables, and wood trees.

Pastoral Training:

Pastors often serve as community leaders in areas without formal government structures. CEPAD provides practical workshops and self-study programs in theology to pastors and their congregations. They can select topics such as stewardship of creation, domestic violence, self-esteem, and working with youth. CEPAD does not plant churches but chooses to work with already established congregations regardless of denomination or affiliation.

4. Primary and Secondary Education:

CEPAD runs a primary and secondary school in Leon, Nicaragua, the Centro Educativo Marcos Antonio Mendieta Roja (CEMAM). This school provides both regular and weekend classes for students to help them excel and graduate in a country where only a very small percentage of students ever reach the sixth grade. The school has about 150 graduates per year.

5. RadioCEPAD:

RadioCEPAD offers a daily broadcast of news, sports, interviews, biblical study, and reflection that reaches almost the entire Pacific region of Nicaragua. Its programming speaks in favor of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the population and emphasizes gender equality, care for the environment, human rights and community action. The station broadcasts on an AM dial from 5am to 6pm and online at www.radiocepad.org.

6. Refugee Support:

CEPAD partners with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees to provide legal assistance and material support to vulnerable individuals and families in the process of integration. Most refugees come to Nicaragua from our

neighbors: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to escape drug and gang violence. The number of refugees to Nicaragua continues to rise, and CEPAD is proud to support the U.N.'s efforts to provide families with new beginnings.

7. Department of International Relations and Communications (DRIC):

CEPAD hosts groups to create a transformative experience here in Nicaragua and to facilitate relationships. After groups get oriented to Nicaragua's history and challenges at our Central Office in Managua, we typically take to one of our rural partnership communities where they get firsthand understanding of rural life. We can tailor a trip to any age and service inclination, and we host Christian groups as well as secular groups like universities.

CEPAD also has a Volunteer and Internship Program for those who may feel called to spend more than one week in Nicaragua. This can even be done for college credit. Please reach out to voluntarios.cepad@gmail.com for any questions or more information.

Travel, Logistics, and Contact Information

Time: Nicaragua does not practice Daylight Savings, so from March to November we are on Mountain Time but on Central Standard Time from November to March.

Contact Information:

Anita Taylor, Director of the DRIC Office: cepad.delegations@gmail.com

Harold Blandón, Delegation Coordinator: partners.cepad@gmail.com

Cairo Cortez, Volunteer and Intern Coordinator: voluntarios.cepad@gmail.com

Office Phone: +505 2270-5018

Passports and Airline Documents:

Each person should have a valid passport with at least six months left before it expires. You should bring 2 copies of the first two pages of each passport in case a passport is lost. Share one copy with your group leader.

On the airplane, each person will receive an entry form to be completed. For the Nicaragua address, put: de la Rotonda el Periodista, 200m al sur, 200m al este

Arrival at Augusto Sandino International Airport in Managua:

As you pass through customs, a \$10 tourist visa will be collected. The local currency, Cordobas, cannot be used to pay the entrance fee. Please make sure you're \$10 bill is crisp and does not have any writing or markings on it.

Hold on to the luggage stubs that your airline provided you when you departed. After collecting. Your luggage, stubs are to be presented to the customs agent who may want to look in some of the bags. Usually they use a "red light/green light" random checking system. If you get the "green" after going through the suitcase scanner, you can go. If you get the "red", they will check your bags. If any baggage is missing, report it to the airline representative in the baggage claim area who will fill out a report. Get a copy of the report and keep your claim stubs.

One or more of the CEPAD delegations staff will await you outside of baggage claim at the airport. Private transportation will bring you to the CEPAD Central Offices.

Health Preparation for Travel to Nicaragua

Find the latest information on health-related information for travel to Nicaragua from the Center for Disease Control website or by contacting your local traveler medicine health clinic.

International travel to a hot, tropical climate is physically demanding. People with health problems or physical limitations may experience some discomfort.

Malaria Prevention:

- Mosquito repellent, long sleeves, and long pants for the evenings.
- Malaria medication is only recommended if you are spending time on the East Coast, please consult your physician for a prescription.

General Medication:

- Aspirin/Ibuprofen/Tylenol
- Benadryl/Sudafed
- Antibiotic ointment
- Band-Aids
- Dramamine or some motion sickness remedy if you are predisposed to car sickness. Nicaragua's inland roads are difficult for some to tolerate.

For diarrhea or upset stomachs it is recommended to bring:

- Pepto Bismol/Tums
- Imodium tablets (to be taken **only** in cases of severe diarrhea)
- Should your doctor concur, a prescription for Ciprofloxacin 500mg, in case you develop bacterial diarrhea.

Bring any prescription medications you take regularly as they are difficult to fill here.

COVID-19:

Currently, you need to show proof of vaccination to enter Nicaragua with your vaccine card. If you are not vaccinated for any reason, please be sure to notify your host for the appropriate instructions on submitting a negative test before your flight.

Packing List

Nicaraguans take pride in what they wear. How you dress can be simple; however, what you wear will reflect not only how Nicaraguans perceive you, but also how they perceive your group and North Americans in general.

Carry-On Bags

In flight to Nicaragua, please wear your most comfortable shoes and clothing in case your luggage arrives late. Pack your essentials and at least one change of clothing in a carry-on bag. Keep anything of value with you. You should also carry the following with you:

- Passport and two photocopies of the first two pages
- Emergency phone numbers, including CEPAD's office phone (+505 2270-5018) and the number of your CEPAD staff coordinator
- Spending money in cash of at least \$35. US currency is accepted here, but your change will be in Cordobas. If you wish to purchase larger items, you will want to bring more cash. CEPAD recommends money belts for those carrying large amounts.

Checked Bags

Make a list of contents of each bag with a description of the bag in case it is lost. In case of lost luggage, it is possible to buy replacement clothing and toiletries in Managua.

If you will be staying in a rural community, you may want to bring the following:

- Clothing for warm to very hot weather
- Shower shoes and walking shoes
- Modest shorts and bathing suit (if recreation day involves swimming). Women are not required to bring dresses or skirts as pants are acceptable.
- Toiletries (these are generally not provided for at CEPAD's Central Office or host homes)
- Water bottle with a wide mouth so it is easier to fill
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Flashlight
- Notebook/Journal
- Bible
- Light jacket or sweater for more mountainous regions as it gets cool at night
- Towel
- Snack food

Accommodations and Transportation

In Managua

Unless other arrangements are made, delegations will stay at CEPAD's Central Offices in guest rooms. It is a simple but clean place. Sheets and towels are provided for use at the Central Offices only. Please be sure to throw the toilet paper in the waste basket and hold down the handle to ensure optimal flushing.

Outside of Managua

When traveling to the countryside, you may choose to either stay with a host family in the community or in a local hotel. A local hotel will equally be simple, toiletries and a towel may or may not be provided. Staying with a host family may mean sleeping on a mattress on the floor, taking a bucket shower or bathing in the river, and using a latrine. Please bring a sleeping bag or set of twin sheets for your mattress.

Gift-Giving in Homestays

If you stay with a family, we do not recommend giving expensive gifts or leaving personal items such as clothing. What you leave behind has a lasting impact on that family, the community, and CEPAD's delegation program. It is more appropriate to leave a postcard of your hometown or church, a thank you note, or something small like a chocolate bar.

Transportation

Transportation is usually by chartered bus or van, although occasionally we ride in smaller four-wheel drive vehicles.

Health, Safety, and Culture

Documents: Please carry a copy of your passport with you at all times. You may choose to keep your original with you or put it in the safe at the Delegations office.

Water and Staying Healthy: Water in Managua is relatively safe to drink, but it is best to use purified water for drinking and brushing your teeth. CEPAD's Central Office has 5-gallon jugs of purified water for your use. Please fill your water bottle there. While out in the community, CEPAD will bring 5-gallon jugs with you so you always have purified water available. Host families will also be provided with purified water for cooking and cleaning the dishes we use.

Drink plenty of fluids during the day to prevent dehydration. Hand sanitizer is effective, but it's preferable to wash your hands with water and soap often and thoroughly. Hand sanitizer should be used as a secondary step. It is your responsibility to do everything you can to ensure your health while recognizing that it is common to experience some dehydration or intestinal issues while traveling.

Plumbing: With any flush toilet, please throw toilet paper in the waste basket. It's a good idea to carry some toilet paper with you as not all public bathrooms have some. In the community where you visit, you will most likely be using latrines. Sometimes families have a box or trash bin for paper while others will throw paper into the latrine. For bathing in the countryside, expect to take a bucket shower or bathe in the river. DO NOT put anything dirty or soapy into the bucket of clean water. This is also true for wash-board and water-cistern systems so that you do not dirty the water.

Security: CEPAD's Central Offices do have a security guard at all times on the premises. However, Managua, like most metropolitan cities, is NOT a safe place to walk around alone at night. Please take precautions as in any large city. Some helpful tips:

- Carry only necessary items.
- Guard your pockets, wallet, cameras, jewelry, watches, etc.
- Keep money out of sight.
- Be careful about crossing the streets in Nicaragua; CARS always have the right of way, NOT pedestrians.
- Unless otherwise authorized, please stay with the group and do not wander off alone.

Photos: Generally, pictures can be taken anywhere except where military personnel is present. It's courteous to ask individuals before taking their picture, but they probably won't mind.

Gifts: Do not hand out trinkets or money to children. If you give to one, you are likely to be mobbed by many more. But more importantly, you will want to help the

Nicaraguans in their efforts not to make beggars out of their children, and people from the North to break away from the “Santa Claus” image prompted by gringo handouts. When tempted, as a general rule, resist. Even when confronted by a new and sometimes overwhelming situation, it is usually best to lead with your head rather than your heart.

Donations: If you should feel moved to make a contribution to a CEPAD program or any other program, please speak with Anita Taylor, the DRIC Director or your CEPAD host. They will help you go through the necessary channels to make a donation. Please do not leave items in the communities where you are staying or make promises that you personally cannot keep. Many times, suggested donations require that CEPAD spans many hours of follow-up time and many miles of driving.

Tips: As a team, you are encouraged to consider a trip for your Nicaraguan delegation host(s) and your driver. You are not required to tip, but it makes a big difference for your Nicaraguan CEPAD hosts and is very appreciated. A tip for a foreign volunteer or mission personnel is *never* appropriate.

Money: The Nicaraguan currency is the Cordoba, but dollars are accepted everywhere. Bring small, crisp bills to avoid changing money.

Alcohol: CEPAD’s Central Offices are an educational and working center. It is a non-smoking and non-alcohol facility. Please helps us to respect that. It is even more important to be vigilant about drinking when we are visiting communities, because the people with whom we work in communities often believe that drinking is a serious sin. Let’s not offend our friends.

You are permitted to drink alcohol if out at a restaurant or on your tour day at your own expense. Any personal consumption should not exceed two drinks.

Transportation: Unless otherwise arranged, CEPAD will take care of arranging private transportation throughout your stay. You should never travel or walk alone and in case of an emergency, please notify your CEPAD host.

Health: If you have health problems or are on any medication, PLEASE LET YOUR DELEGATION HOST KNOW. Most people visiting Nicaragua stay well and energized in spite of the heat, full scheduler, and new foods. Should you feel ill, please let us know.

Should you get diarrhea, take only Pepto Bismol at first, NOT IMODIUM. Drink lots of fluids and rest, try to keep eating, and see a staff person. Resting and staying hydrated are important measures in preventing and recovering from any illness.

Do not go barefoot, please wear shower shoes if you at the hotel or host home and shake out your shoes and sleeping bag for scorpions before using. Scorpion stings are not fatal, but they will leave you fairly incapacitated for 12 hours. They like to hide in

small, warm, places such as shoes, open bags, and clothing left on the floor. Please keep your suitcase and any bags closed at all times unless in use.

Cultural Hints: In Latin America, greetings are an important gesture of communication and they are very defined. You generally stand up, extend your hand for a handshake, and say “mucho gusto” (nice to meet you) followed by giving your own name. Shake hands again when you say good-bye.

Nicaraguans may offer to give you a hug to show affection and welcome while greeting. Many women are also greeted with a kiss on the cheek or just touching cheeks. Please do not be frightened by this if it happens to you.