



Volunteer/Intern Information Handbook

*Please read this document thoroughly, as it contains information
that is vital to your preparation, comfort and safety.*

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WHO WE ARE

Peace and Hope Frontier Mission is a multinational nongovernmental organization committed to social and economic development in Nicaragua. We believe poverty has many faces. Therefore, we apply principles of holistic service, care and participation throughout our projects and programs. Our mission is to work closely with our constituents to improve their quality of life in many sectors, such as health, education, social mobilization, spiritual growth, infrastructure and renewable energy. Most recently, the focus of our work has been improving the health of communities by eliminating water-borne illnesses by providing clean drinking water through the drilling of wells and by implementing training in the safe practices related to water, hygiene and sanitation.

Peace and Hope Frontier Mission uses a participatory approach in the design, implementation, management and evaluation of its projects and programs by utilizing local/national capacity. We believe that our projects are not our projects...they belong to our constituents. Therefore, our projects and initiatives are a result of mandates established by our constituents.

Peace and Hope Frontier Mission bases its work on Biblical principles, captured in part by the messages of 2 Corinthians 9:12 and Colossians 3:17.

“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.” 2 Corinthians 9:12

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:17

We are committed to all peoples of all races, religions and social strata in Nicaragua. Our staff, volunteers, projects and programs must meet a standard of integrity and diversity that is aligned with our Christian ethos and that provides the best possible service and care for our constituents.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Snapshot of Nicaragua.....	4, 5
Medical Related Topics.....	6
Conditions and Considerations.....	7
Trip Preparation/Things to Bring.....	8
Volunteer Fundraising/Expenses.....	9
Emergency Information.....	10
Staying Healthy.....	11
Frequently Asked Questions.....	12, 13

The information provided in this document has been designed to facilitate both your decision to participate with Peace and Hope Frontier Mission and to aid in the preparation for your time of adventure and service in Nicaragua.

A Snapshot of Nicaragua

General Country Overview

Basic Statistics/Information:

Population: 5,465,100 (2005)

Annual Per Capita Income: US \$410 (1998)

Literacy Rate: 67.5%

Religion: 73% Roman Catholic, 15% Evangelical, 1.5% Moravian, 1.9% Other, 8.5% None (1995 Census)

Major Exports: coffee, bananas, beef, shrimp, lobster, tobacco, sugar, gold, peanuts, cotton, timber

Economy: Agricultural nation with recent growth in tourism and foreign investment

Government: Independent Republic, President Daniel Ortega (elected 2006)

Currency: Cordoba (approx. 20 Cordoba per US \$1)

Official Language: Spanish

Key Concerns:

- 2nd poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere with lowest Per Capita Income in Latin America
- Massive unemployment—8% unemployed, 47% underemployment (50% do not have regular employment and 80% live at or below poverty level)
- Huge international debt; heavy dependence on foreign assistance
- Distribution of wealth is one of the most unequal on the globe
- Plagued by natural disasters: earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides and tidal waves are an ongoing threat
- Isolation of indigenous populations and Atlantic Coast communities
- Serious lack of social, political and cultural cohesion between eastern and western seaboards
- Political corruption, fragile democracy, lingering effects of past dictatorships
- Poor transportation system; buses are main means of travel in cities; navigable rivers
- Environmental issues: deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution

Geography:

- Pacific Coastal Region: highly fertile, where most major towns and cities are located, includes capital city of Managua (pop. over one million), plains interrupted by volcanoes, Lake Nicaragua (with its own variety of freshwater shark!)
- Central Highlands: wetter, cooler climate, mountain peaks reach 3,000-6,000 feet
- Eastern Lowlands: Atlantic (Mosquito) Coast, hot and humid, comprises 56% of Nicaragua's land area, isolated communities separated by rainforest, jungle, rivers and wetlands, annual rainfall up to 250"
- Neighboring countries: bordered by Honduras to the north and Costa Rica to the south
- Principal rivers: Rio San Juan (borders Costa Rica), Rio Grande de Matagalpa (central Atlantic Coast), and Rio Coco (to the north)

Mosquito Coast

Basic Statistics/Information:

- Ethnically and linguistically diverse
- Historically connected to British and opposed to Spanish control
- Ethnic connections to the Caribbean Coast
- Religion: traditionally Anglican and Moravian communities with limited Roman Catholic influence

--Population: 108,018 (South Atlantic Autonomous Region, RAAS, including Bluefields and villages)

Key Concerns:

- Isolated communities with few resources and insufficient infrastructure; water travel predominant, usually by *panga*
- Impoverished people groups with little industry, limited market and high unemployment (90% in Bluefields); *Chamba* as a way of life
- Poor health: unclean drinking water, intestinal problems, Malaria, Dengue Fever, Tuberculosis, drug use and HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, meager diet, unsuitable sanitation
- Limited medical services; shortage of doctors, nurses, proper supplies, modern facilities
- Corruption, stemming from history of civil war, regional disputes, drug trafficking, and political instability
- Drug trade: transshipment point for cocaine destined for U.S. and arms-for-drugs dealing
- Natural disasters: continual threat of hurricanes and tropical storms (e.g. Mitch in 1998 and Joan in 1988)

Geography:

- Characterized by sheltered coastal waters, river estuaries and swamps, shallows and sandbars
- Rio Grande de Matagalpa: longest river completely in Nicaragua
- Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas: largest coastal communities, major ports
- Ground travel to the western side of country begins by boat on the Rio Escondido to Rama and continues by bus to Managua; trip takes nearly 14 hours
- El Bluff: small peninsula protecting Bluefields Bay; key eastern shipping port
- Pearl Lagoon: important waterway for travel up north along the coast
- Corn Island: closest thing to a tourist destination; lies 40 miles offshore, east of Bluefields, speak English
- Rio San Juan: southeast corner of Nicaragua, drains inland sea to Atlantic Ocean, largely unappreciated

People Groups and Languages:

- Culturally and racially different from other parts of the country
- National language: Spanish; taught in schools; people on Atlantic Coast speak Spanish as a 1st, 2nd or 3rd language
- Miskitu: largest minority people and language in the east (154,000); historically the most tenacious, aggressive people group of region; strong ties to the British and much hostility toward the Spanish; 5 dialects, all mutually intelligible; 52%-58% literacy in native language
- Miskitu translation of the Bible was dedicated at the end of 2000
- Coastal populations often work in agriculture or the fishing industry, although many areas are becoming over-fished
- Common Miskitu phrases:

Hello—Naksa

How are you?—Nahkisma?

Fine—Pain

Goodbye—Aisabi

What is your name?—Man ninam dia?

- Caribbean Creole/English: 30,000 speak an English-based Creole; 3rd language of some Miskitu speakers, and spoken by some Spanish speakers; consider English their primary language
- The Mayagna language: closely related to Miskitu; 6,700 speakers (1982); also called Woolwa or Ulwa



Medical Related Topics

- Please visit your local travel clinic and/or consult with a doctor or nurse practitioner regarding immunizations and medical issues/concerns related to Nicaragua.
 - Prior to visiting the clinic, you should speak to your primary care physician to determine insurance coverage for necessary immunizations. Standard immunizations should be updated as your doctor deems necessary.
 - Be sure to have your physician sign off on the Immunization Checklist provided in your Volunteer Packet after each immunization. You will need to submit this to PHFM personnel prior to departing for Nicaragua.
 - Please make a photocopy of the checklist in case the original is lost. You *do not* need this to enter the country, but having a permanent record for future reference not only is helpful, but will be important should an emergency arise in Nicaragua.

- The entire immunization process could take up to two months, as some vaccinations require a series of shots taken over a period of time....so please get started early!

- Provide Peace and Hope Frontier Mission with a detailed listing of current health issues and any prescription medications you will be taking during your trip to Nicaragua.

- **The following immunizations are required:**

- TYPHOID
- TETANUS/DIPHTHERIA
- HEPATITUS A
- TB-MANTOUX (a test, taken before and after the trip)

- **The following oral prescription medications are necessary:**

- MALARIA MEDICATION: Please get this early since you must begin taking the pills one to two weeks before your trip commences, as is the case with most anti-malarial meds.
- ANITBIOTICS for travelers' diarrhea (Cipro/Ciprofloxacin is common brand issued)

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- **The following immunization is recommended: *please consult your physician and local travel clinic.***

- RABIES: this inoculation is a "gray area" for our volunteers who are in Nicaragua for less than one month, although Central America is labeled as "high risk". It requires a series of three shots over a 4-week period. Even with the initial immunizations, individuals who may have come into contact with rabies must still receive treatment, but have a greater window of time for that treatment. For more information, please consult the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov.

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- **The following immunization is recommended: *please consult a physician.***

- HEPATITUS B: This is certainly a worthwhile option for anyone who deems it necessary. The immunization requires a series of three shots.

*Please consult the CDC regarding risks associated with the Zika Virus at www.cdc.gov.

Conditions and Considerations

Following is a description of some conditions and issues we have experienced in Nicaragua. It is imperative that you are fully prepared and capable of making educated and reasonable decisions regarding your role as a volunteer in Nicaragua. We tell you these realities not to scare you away, but instead to challenge you with the excitement they can bring!

Be prepared for:

- ◇ Flying in small planes, boating, insects, wild animals, limited and basic food, bug bites, and tents, as well as extreme conditions of heat, wind, rain and humidity.
- ◇ On many occasions we will not be near modern medical services. However, our leadership upholds strict safety measures and always has First Aid and basic medical supplies on hand.
- ◇ Given that Peace and Hope Frontier Mission often operates in frontier areas which lack a strong police presence, drug smuggling activities and bandits present some risk.

Some guidelines to consider:

- ◇ Nicaragua needs volunteers of all ages, and thus, the diversity of the country is something that we hope will not be a discouragement to you. Over the years, we have hosted hundreds of people in the jungles of Nicaragua with a broad range of volunteers, including a family with 10, 12 and 13 year old daughters and an 80 year old man.
 - Our network, communications and logistics are exceptionally well-refined. Under no circumstances will Peace and Hope Trust expose you to unnecessary risk.
- ◇ We prohibit the consumption of alcohol by our team members while volunteering in Nicaragua. Regardless of your personal views, we must maintain a level of integrity and performance that allows us to live up to our nationally renowned reputation as an organization that has set the standard for service in Nicaragua.
- ◇ Our teams live and work together in, often times, a very close environment. Volunteers must remember that they are first and foremost part of a team. Everyone will be expected to contribute to some domestic responsibilities while serving in Nicaragua, which will include such things as preparing meals and maintaining common living areas.
- ◇ We are confident that our volunteers get the most out of their experience when they come equipped with an attitude of service and flexibility. It is important that team members are willing to be used when and where they are most needed, taking action with a positive response of caring and compassion.

Trip Preparation/Things to Bring

1. **Medicine and First Aid items:**

Prescription antibiotic diarrhea treatment (e.g. Cipro), Imodium AD, antibacterial ointment for small cuts, Band-aids, malaria medication, Advil/Tylenol, Bendadryl tablets, mosquito bite cream, aloe vera (if you sunburn easily), latex gloves (1 pair), and any personal prescriptions.

2. **Health-related items:**

Waterproof sunscreen (high factor), insect repellent containing D.E.E.T., sunglasses, sun hat, flat packets of handi-wipes/antibacterial towelettes, safety goggles and ear plugs for construction work.

3. **Toiletries:**

Soap, shampoo, shaving kit, toothpaste/brush, deodorant, sanitary supplies, flat-packing tissue or toilet paper, 1 hand towel, 1 bath towel, flip-flops and portable mirror.

4. **Miscellaneous Equipment/Tools:**

Flashlight and headlamp with spare batteries, work gloves, disposable breathing mask, clock or watch w/ alarm, multi-function jack knife, rain poncho, large plastic bag that fits over backpack/luggage and small zip-locks (for keeping belongings dry), water bottle, hidden money belt, camera and umbrella.

5. **Clothes:**

High work boots that support the ankle (helpful to apply water repellent coating), lighter sports shoes, hat or cap, 7 sets underwear, bathing suit, 2 pairs thick socks, 6 pairs normal cotton socks, 1 pair rugged work pants, 1 pair light cotton pants, 2 pairs shorts, 5 cotton t-shirts (2 long sleeve), 1 sweatshirt, sleep wear, 1 set more dressy clothes/shoes for church. High rubber boots are strongly recommended, and necessary during the rainy season (July and August).

6. **Other miscellany:**

Bible, journal, family photos to show locals, Spanish dictionary, small food/snack items you might crave (non-perishable and unbreakable), compact writing materials, deck of cards or other travel games and a novel (for down-time).

7. **Gifts (suggested options if space permits):**

Hard candy to give children, postcards or calendars, stickers, craft supplies for schools, baseballs, shoe polish, dolls, or whatever else you can think of. Please note: On many occasions, friends, family, colleagues or companies might be willing to donate specific items. Examples of past donations include Spanish children's books, baseball equipment, musical instruments, clothing/shoes, tools to support local trades (fishing line, carving instruments, sewing items), etc.

8. **Money and Documents:**

Passport, passport photocopy, immunization record, general and travel insurance documents, credit card, personal spending money and drivers license. Keep all important documents in waterproof zip-lock bag in a safe place. We recommend bringing dollars, not traveler's checks. US dollars are widely accepted; however, bring only new bills from the bank, as torn and blemished bills are sometimes refused. Small bills are preferable (1's, 5's, 10's).

9. **Luggage and packing:**

It is advised that you bring one large backpack (not external frame) and one suitcase or duffel bag. Each bag has a weight limit of 50 pounds; however, please check your ticket to confirm weight restrictions. One checked bag is to be used for personal items, while the second will most likely be filled by Peace and Hope personnel w/ relief/trip supplies.

10. **Carry-on luggage:**

Travel in your work boots (to save space) and please bring one good-sized carry-on bag/backpack (within airline size limits) adequate for important/essential items you can't do without (being mindful of carry-on item regulations). Keep all items of great value (such as camera, medications and important documents) in this bag, along with anything else you might need in the event that there is an overnight flight delay or bags are lost or delayed en-route to Nicaragua (including at least one set of work clothes).

****Although this is a fairly comprehensive list, you may think of additional items you deem necessary. The listed items are important, but to avoid personal expense, check with Peace and Hope Frontier Mission and team leadership before purchasing items you do not have (there may be spare items available).*

Volunteer Fundraising and Expenses

→The volunteer is responsible for raising or providing all of the following funds necessary for participating on the trip:

***We strongly encourage volunteers to seek sponsorship from friends, family and co-workers. This both eases the financial burden for team members and helps attract the support of others who would like to contribute to the projects but are currently unable to participate through volunteering.*

Approximate Cost Breakdown in US Dollars

International Airfare	\$1100
Airport Fees (Managua)	\$ 50
Food and Lodging	\$500
Project Donation	\$225
Ministry Expenses	\$300
Transportation in country (boat, taxi, bus, plane)	\$400
TOTAL:	\$2,575

→Please note that the above costs include all expenses and are subject to change. The given total is calculated based on a 10 to 14 day stay in Nicaragua.

- Figure an additional \$250 per week beyond two weeks.
- We have an alternate cost scale for long-term interns and volunteers.

→ **SUPPORT CHECKS:** As you find individuals to support your volunteer effort, please instruct them to make checks payable to Peace and Hope Frontier Mission, Inc. It is **very important** that donors write "Nicaragua" in the memo line...not the volunteer's name! For those volunteers associated with and traveling with a specific church, we ask that you please channel donations through your team leader.

- All checks will be mailed to the volunteer, who will record the donor's name, address, check number, check date and dollar amount. The volunteer will then submit the checks either to the Team Leader or directly to Peace and Hope Trust. Volunteers should include a detailed summary of checks received and pay close attention to their fundraising progress. A donation spreadsheet has been included in the application materials for your convenience.
- The volunteer will be responsible for sending a personal letter of thanks to each of their supporters, either before or after his/her trip to Nicaragua.

→ **FINANCIAL SUPPORT** given to support the humanitarian project and / or individuals participating in the project is **not refundable**. All gifts are tax deductible and will be used for the exempt purpose of Peace and Hope Frontier Mission to relieve poverty in Nicaragua. Volunteers are responsible for informing their supporters of this policy. If for some reason a volunteer is unable to participate in the trip, donations given in support of this volunteer will be a gift for the project or ministry in Nicaragua and **will not be refunded**.

→ **AIRFARE:** Once airfare is purchased, it is **non-refundable**. If a volunteer is unable to participate in the trip after airfare has been purchased, their airfare becomes null and void, and in most cases, cannot be transferred for use at a later date.

→ **PERSONAL CASH:** We recommend that team members bring some personal cash for the trip. During our time in various locations throughout Nicaragua there will be opportunities to buy local crafts, such as exquisite rosewood carvings, woodwork

and jewelry. Moreover, there are small snack shops located on most corners. **New, crisp bills in small denominations are recommended.**

Emergency Information

Following is a list of names and numbers that can be used by family and friends in the U.S. in the event of an emergency for which you must be reached. Please note however, this information is for emergency use only.

In the event of an emergency please call:

- ✧ Tamara Lopez: 011.505.8641.4504 PHFM Administrator, Managua, Nicaragua
- >Tamara will place a call at a specified time, usually 4:00pm, to the Peace and Hope Frontier Mission basecamp.

Contact information in Nicaragua:

- ✧ To place a call to one of our main facilities in Nicaragua, most volunteers can be reached by dialing one of the following numbers: *(Please do not call later than 8:00pm Central Time)*

- >Peter's Cell Phone: 011.505.8601.9181
- >Other Numbers: 011.505.2266.9943 – U.S. Embassy
011.505.8432.1371 – Raul Sing, Bluefields contact

<There will be occasions when the volunteer is unreachable.>

Precautionary Measures

- Unfortunately, emergencies are not 100% unavoidable. For that reason, all volunteers are required to purchase their own traveler's insurance. We recommend using Travelex Insurance Services or Global Travel Shield....

Travelex Insurance Services
888.407.5404
www.travelexinsurance.com

Global Travel Shield
800.332.4899
www.globaltravelshield.com

- We recommended that volunteers visit the U.S. Department of State website and submit their travel plans through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).

Staying Healthy

Since volunteers are entering into another country, it is of utmost importance that we take some precautions to remain healthy. The following tips and general guidelines have been learned over our years of serving in Nicaragua. Please read them carefully and apply them as they fit various team situations.

1. Water—always check with team leaders. Filtered water will be provided at all PHT facilities, as well as on the work site each day. Do not drink water from the tap. When in public areas, only drink beverages that are bottled and sealed. Remember to hydrate frequently in a tropical, humid climate as in Nicaragua.
2. Do not eat lettuce or other green leafy vegetables without the permission of team leaders. The general rule about food (especially in rural areas) is this: if you cannot peel it (bananas, oranges, etc.), boil it; if you cannot boil it, do not eat it. Do not eat any fruit or vegetables raw unless they are washed and peeled.
3. As a general rule, do not purchase snack items that are prepared in the open market, as strict standards of cleanliness and hygiene cannot be guaranteed.
4. Diarrhea is to be expected. Even the slightest bacterial changes that result when you visit other parts of the United States can result in intestinal disturbances. To control diarrhea, it is recommended that you bring Kaopectate, Immodium and you must bring prescription antibiotics for diarrhea.
5. With so many people sleeping, eating and working in the same areas, it is imperative that volunteers wash their hands frequently throughout the day.
6. Do not walk around with bare feet at any time. Soil may contain parasites (e.g. hookworm) and microorganisms that may enter through the skin. Wear gloves at the worksite and avoid skin contact with the soil whenever practical.
7. In foreign countries, do not go swimming in fresh water without first asking your team leaders. There are parasites living in some fresh water bodies in developing countries that could do significant harm to your body. These typically enter through your skin.
8. Never antagonize animals or insects and avoid contact with them. Tarantulas and scorpions are not usually deadly, but they can hurt you badly. Spiders, ants, bees, etc. can be dangerous. Treat them with respect.
9. Apply insect repellent with deet, especially when you notice or anticipate mosquitoes.
10. If you have allergies, prepare before you go by bringing medication that you need. Please notify team leaders of any allergies prior to departing for Nicaragua.
11. Volunteers are required to travel in teams of three or more people at all times. Do not wander away from the larger group without first notifying and receiving permission from team leaders. Some facilities are guarded 24 hours/day and team members are not allowed to go beyond property bounds after dark.
12. Be alert to your environment at all times and use a flashlight when walking at night. Please be sure to shake out boots and shoes vigorously before putting them on to avoid an encounter with an uninvited guest.

13. **Don't take unnecessary risks!** You are most valuable to the team and the people we are serving if you are healthy.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the average age of a typical Peace and Hope volunteer?

Our volunteers represent all age groups from 15 years of age to 80. Our most concentrated age brackets are between 18 and 28 and between 50 and 70.

What skills does an applicant need to be accepted as a volunteer for Peace and Hope?

The only prerequisites for our volunteers are that they have a willingness to serve others and are good team players. If you work well with other people and have compassion for those in need you have what it takes.

Can I still volunteer if I don't speak Spanish?

While a background in the Spanish language is helpful, it certainly won't prevent you from enjoying and being able to participate fully in the trip. Many Nicaraguans speak at least a small amount of English and Peace and Hope employs translators to accompany each team.

Are there bugs and snakes?

After ten years of working in Nicaragua, I (Peter Coleman) have only seen two snakes. The bugs are no worse than a summer evening in the Midwest United States.

I am a vegetarian, is that going to be a problem?

No. We frequently have vegetarians join our volunteer teams. Nicaragua is overflowing with fruit and vegetables in some places. You will have to be your own advocate at times as the teams are responsible for the menu.

Is the water in Nicaragua safe for drinking?

Unfortunately, potable water is hard to come by for most of the Nicaraguan population. However, Peace and Hope maintains state-of-the-art filtering systems at each of our facilities, thus providing a constant source of purified drinking water for our volunteers.

What are the accommodations like?

Our volunteers experience a dynamic array of housing situations. In Managua, our team members stay in very comfortable accommodation with hot showers at least one day/night on either end of their trip. On the Atlantic Coast, upriver in the jungle where we do most of our work, housing is much more basic. Our volunteers stay in dormitory style housing with bunk beds, flush toilets and shower rooms for cold, bucket showers and eat in a dining hall.

What sort of food will I eat in Nicaragua?

Although basic, most volunteers find the food options in Nicaragua quite tasty. Each team is directly involved in preparing many, if not all of, their meals and therefore is responsible for the menu. Typical fare includes oatmeal and toast for breakfast, sandwiches and soup for lunch, and a more traditional Nicaraguan meal of rice, beans, vegetables and chicken or fish for dinner. A large selection of local fruits, vegetables and bread are also always available.

Can I contact my husband/wife/parents?

Sometimes. Depending on where you are staying and the availability of cell signals. While upriver in the jungle we will check in daily with our contact person in the States, so family members are always welcome to call this person for an update on the trip.

Is there a dress code for these trips?

While modesty is strongly encouraged for all our volunteers, Peace and Hope does not enforce specific dress standards. We simply ask that all clothing be respectful of the local population and of our commitment to maintaining an example of integrity. Work clothes may consist of shorts, tank tops, pants, t-shirts, etc. At least one nicer outfit is required for

attending local church services on Sunday. Women should dress as modestly as possible to avoid unwanted attention from Latino men (avoiding short shorts and short skirts). Laundry services are provided at each of our locations allowing volunteers to pack fewer items and reuse them several times during the trip.

I am not really that great at “encouraging” people face to face but I love to build things...can you use me?

Definitely! Many of our projects are based on the construction of a building or infrastructure...we need you too!

I am traveling through Central America and I would like to volunteer for you as I pass through Nicaragua...will that work? Yes. We accommodate “travelers” many times a year. We welcome those with a willing spirit, a hard work ethic and compassion to help others. However, our resources are committed to the people of Nicaragua so “travelers” must be committed and contributing members of the volunteer team.

My school, college, church, friends or work place would like to send a team of volunteers...is that possible?

Yes. We host many such groups every year. Typically the ideal team size is between 10 and 15 people. However, there are many opportunities for individuals and small groups to join other teams serving with Peace and Hope in Nicaragua at the same time.

What about individuals? I don't have others to join me and I really want be involved in your projects.

Great! We welcome individuals both to join existing teams and to work independently at times. The more diverse our volunteer base, the richer the gifts we have to offer our beneficiaries.

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