

OUR SWEAT, OUR SALE, OUR SUCCESS!

You can support our cooperative through buying our products. We make t-shirts, camisoles, blouses, nightshirts, shorts, pants and more. We also offer quality screen printing services. We are a fully equipped sew shop and guarantee that all of our products are sweat free made by the worker-owners in our cooperative.

For complete pricing information and a list of our distributors, see our website at:

www.FairTradeZone.jhc-cdca.org



ADDRESS TO NICARAGUA:

Km. 11 Carretera Nueva a León, 1.6 km. Abajo
Ciudad Sandino, Managua, NICARAGUA

TEL: 505-269-7073 (English)/505-884-4393

WEBSITE: www.FairTradeZone.jhc-cdca.org

EMAIL: jhc@jhc-cdca.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.jhc-cdca.org

www.maggiesorganics.com

PROVIDING AN ALTERNATIVE TO SWEATSHOPS:



THE FAIR TRADE ZONE

WOMEN'S SEWING COOPERATIVE

NUOVA VIDA,
NICARAGUA

OUR PROJECT

In 1998, several countries in Central America, including Nicaragua, were besieged by a terrible hurricane that destroyed the region. At that time, ours were among many poor families living along the lakeshore in Managua. During the hurricane, the lake flooded, we lost our homes and were re-located.



Our families became part of a new urban area called "Nueva Vida," or New Life in Ciudad Sandino, just outside Managua. Located seven miles west of the capital, Ciudad Sandino has the largest population density in the country: it houses over 7,000 people per square mile. It's also the poorest city in the country and our local government can do little to help the 200,000 residents - the mayor's office has \$2.30 per person per year in tax revenues to provide all city services.

After Hurricane Mitch, the Center for Development in Central America (CDCA) began to search for a way to combat

the 80% unemployment in Nueva Vida. Through a marketing partnership with Maggie's Organics in Michigan, USA, (www.maggiesorganics.com) the idea came about to form a sewing cooperative for the women of Nueva Vida.



In Nicaragua there are many free trade zones where mainly women work in "sweat shops," producing clothing under unacceptable labor conditions, long hours and low pay. In a cooperative, the workers are the owners. We are working together to create sustainable employment in the community so that we can support ourselves and our families.



OUR SWEAT

As members, we have had to make many



sacrifices for our co-op - for two years we worked with no pay building our factory with our own hands. We each worked 640 hours to become members of the co-op.

The CDCA has worked to help us organize our sewing co-operative. The organization set up a revolving loan fund to buy construction materials and later for the purchase of the machines. This money is being paid back to CDCA to help form new cooperative projects and generate more sustainable employment.

OUR FREE TRADE ZONE

In 2004 our co-op became the world's first worker-owned free trade zone, allowing us to compete on an equal footing with traditional "sweatshops" while providing just pay, fair working conditions, and worker control of the workplace. Our free trade zone, **The Fair Trade Zone**, is wholly owned and

operated by the members of the Nueva Vida Women's Sewing Cooperative.

All of the benefits awarded traditional free trade zones - duty free imports/exports and tax breaks - give our cooperative more profit, which translates into direct benefits for worker-owners, who share the profits, as well as benefiting the wider community where we live.

Unlike conventional free trade zones, our co-op is owned by Nicaraguans, we keep our money in local banks and the profits of our business stay here in Nicaragua.

OUR FUTURE



Our dream for our cooperative is to grow to be able to provide quality full time employment for more families in our community. To make this

happen, we want to have a vertically integrated production chain of sweat-free clothing - meaning that every aspect of the clothes from the cottonseed to the finished product -- is made under good labor conditions.

Our co-op is taking the next step to make this dream a reality: we're building a spinning plant. This will give Nicaraguan organic cotton farmers a market for their crops and encourage conventional farmers to begin the transition to organic cotton.



Our spinning plant will make sweat free yarn to be knitted into cloth and made into our Fair Trade Zone products. The spinning plant will not only help Nicaraguan farmers, but it will provide 45 new jobs as well as allowing us to expand our clothing production staff from 53 to 90. When our spinning plant becomes operational in 2007, we will be able to guarantee that 4 of the 7 stages in the process of making cotton clothing are entirely **sweat-free**.



OUR LABOR PRACTICES

Our co-op has a policy requiring workers to apply for membership after three months in the cooperative. We implemented this policy in order to avoid a worker vs. owner dynamic: **we are all worker-owners and we all have a vested interest in the health and success of our business.**

Our worker-owners are treated fairly. We are free to leave our stations as needed, we work regular hours, and any overtime is voluntary and paid double. All of our workers have health insurance and social security.

Wages: As a cooperative, we must always try to think like both owners and workers. We struggle to pay ourselves good wages without endangering the success of the cooperative as a whole. Our average worker **earns twice the minimum wage in**

the traditional free trade zones in Nicaragua and all of our members share in the profits of our cooperative.