

# 2008 Annual Report



## A Letter from our Executive Director

2008 was a year of increased involvement in the communities where Bridges is present in Nicaragua with significant effort made to empower community members as decision-makers in the programs that Bridges has been involved with for over fifteen years. It was also a year of continued growth for our North American volunteer program with over 800 participants joining hands with community members on construction, public health, education and economic development initiatives. All of these achievements have resulted in changed lives on both sides of the Bridge.

One of the most exciting developments in 2008 was the drafting and signing of our first agreements with the communities where we are present. These agreements have led to more active community management of the revolving funds established by Bridges to support sustainable long-term initiatives. Because of this, Bridges is now positioned to move into several new communities in greater need of development assistance.

2008 also marked the first ever conference of community leaders from Bridges sites at the inaugural All Sites Exchange. This gathering provided a joyous time for our Nicaraguan communities to share their experience and join hands with fellow leaders in celebration of all that has been accomplished through their collaboration with our staff and the thousands of volunteers who have joined us since our founding.

As we move into 2009, Bridges is poised to continue strengthening its outreach in Nicaragua and to our volunteers from North America. On behalf of Bridges' Board of Directors, staff and the many communities that we work with... thank you for your continued support. We hope that you will continue to join us as we seek to build a world in which local and global communities actively organize and work together for a just world.

Bridges to Community, Inc. is a registered 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization in the United States. Our federal identification number is 13-3731405.



Kevin Mestrich  
Executive Director

## Community Housing & Infrastructure

In 2008 community leaders from Francia 2, Ticuantepe began to use their community fund, which was established using payments from the Bridges housing project, to issue loans to town members. The 7 loans, totaling \$1600, have been used in various projects such as the improvement of pineapple crops and house construction repairs for families who have not participated in Bridges' housing project. The loans will be paid back over a period of 12 months with a low 2% interest rate and minimal administration fees.

We caught up with one beneficiary, Don Nyito, purchasing wood for the construction of his home the same day he received his loan. From day one he put the money to work and has already made his first payment back to the fund!

### **In 2008, BTC...**

- Built 95 houses for families living in substandard homes (664 homes since our work began in 1992)
- Built 1 foot bridge
- Built 1 police station



## Community Education

“My father laughs at me for studying. He did not study, and works in agriculture, and he wants me to be out in the fields with him. In fact, my whole family makes fun of me for studying. I have a grade average of 94% and I plan to continue my studies despite the consequences. For as I look around and see the terrible conditions in which my family lives, I know I do not want those conditions for my own family in the future- nor for my family right now. The best thing about the Bridges Scholarship program is that for the first time in my life someone is watching me and looking at my grades. Someone is happy for me when I score 97 on a test and notices if my grades slip a little in one subject. I know that I have to study hard, not only because I could lose my scholarship, but, because I would be embarrassed to face the Bridges staff.”

*- Masaya Scholarship Student*

### **In 2008, BTC...**

- Provided & maintained 85 scholarships for High School and College students
- Refurbished classrooms in 3 schools
- Built 7 school kitchens
- Improved student attendance & retention through our classroom support which benefits over 1500 students
- Provided 220 children with computer classes



## Community Health

In Siuna, the majority of health posts have only one medical professional and often times cannot attend to the number of patients in the whole community, for this reason the Ministry of Health looks forward to the Bridges medical brigades each year, as they aid in attending those patients who are in most need. In addition these brigades bring medical equipment and medical supplies.

One of the principal problems that affects Siuna as a city, is that it has only one clinic to serve 140 communities. The Bridges medical brigades are very important because they help us confront the health situation in our municipalities, as well as provide patients seeking a second opinion an alternative that they would otherwise not have.

-Dora Adilia, Campo Uno  
*Community Leader, Siuna*

### **In 2008, BTC...**

- Built 63 new latrines that help reduce family illnesses including diarrhea, parasites and fever
- Built 40 stoves that cut cooking time in half, reducing the amount of wood used and smoke emitted
- Provided 150 mosquito nets, reducing the incidence of Malaria and Dengue
- Provided families with 40 water filters and 20 water protection containers
- Administered 6 Health posts supported with medicines, medical staff, and provided service to over 3000 patients



## Community Economic Development



“The support that we have received from Bridges through the economic development program has provided a solution to one of the major problems faced by our community of organic cacao producers by supplying us the means with which to dry our cacao plants and guarantee a high quality product to export. This support helped us to save our crop this season, allowing us to harvest over 2000 pounds of cacao and generate \$3000 dollars which we would have otherwise lost. Thank you for supporting us in such a way that has improved our economy and our ability to provide daily for our families.”

- Derman Valerio, El Carao, Siuna

*Farmer, Community Leader & Cacao Cooperative Founder*

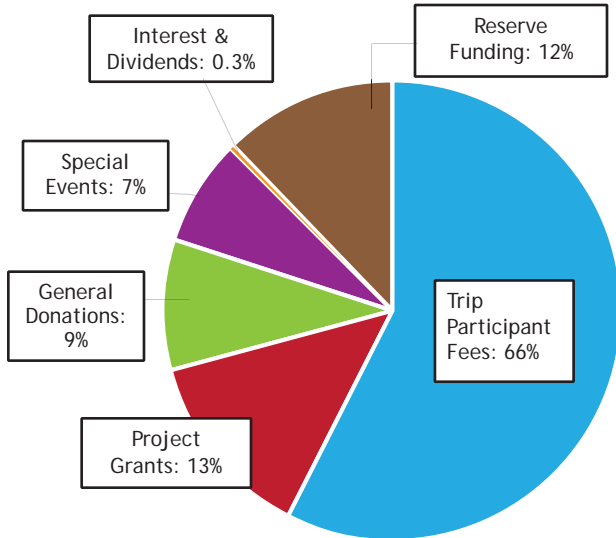
### **In 2008, BTC...**

- Distributed 64 small Business Loans increasing the family income of families & doubling the income of over half of them
- Provided 18 families with cows
- Provided 19 families with pigs
- Provided 96 chickens benefiting 12 families
- Built 1 Natural Medicine Cooperative
- Planted 42 acres of cacao & other income generating crops
- Built & equipped 1 Technical School



# 2008 Financial Report

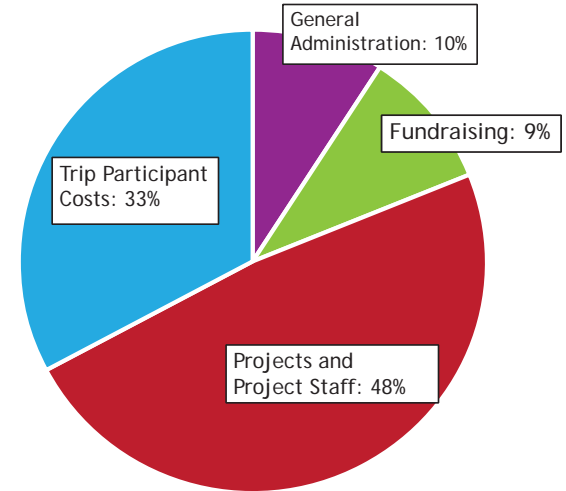
## Revenue - 2008



Trip Participant Fees	\$1,411,849
Project Grants	\$325,032
General Donations	\$224,579
Special Events	\$180,705
Interest & Dividends	\$7,200
<u>Reserve Funding</u>	<u>\$294,318</u>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,443,683</b>

Total assets at year-end:  
\$364,558

## Expenses - 2008



Trip Participant Costs	\$801,171
Projects and Project Staff	\$1,184,545
General Administration	\$238,918
Fundraising	\$219,049
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,443,683</b>



# Bridges to Community

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## Bridges to Community Board of Directors

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## Our Mission:

Bridges to Community, Inc. is a nonprofit community development organization that takes volunteers to developing countries to work, learn and reflect. Through the process of living and working with local communities on construction, health and environmental projects, Bridges promotes cross-cultural learning, a deepening awareness of our global interdependence and a commitment to the common good.