

TITLE Building Pathways from Poverty: Educating Nicaragua’s Youth for Productive Adulthood

SUMMARY The Instituto Tecnico Especializado Juan Pablo II in Managua, Nicaragua, educates and trains 200 impoverished adolescents each year. Upon graduation, they obtain jobs paying decent wages, providing them economically independent lives. Thus, the school helps students avoid the dangerous migrant journey to other countries in search of financial stability.

NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM Nicaragua is the second poorest nation in the Americas. Children living in the barrios of Managua do not have opportunity to attend high school due to lack of governmental support, costs of private education, and the crushing weight of poverty on their families, compelling them to work at a very young age. Without the ability to gain knowledge and skills, barrio youth are doomed at the bottom of the world’s economy. There, they will face tremendous risks to health, be unable to support their families, and witness their children enter the same vicious cycle of poverty without hope of escape.

WHAT/WHERE/HOW The *Instituto Tecnico Especializado Juan Pablo II* is a high school in one of the poorest barrios in Managua, Nicaragua. It is officially sanctioned by the Archdiocese of Managua, but is not a Catholic high school. It receives no funds from the Nicaraguan government. The school’s director, Msgr. Silvio Fonseca, is a priest in the Archdiocese of Managua, under the direction of Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes Solorzano. Msgr. Fonseca, who holds a PhD in Moral Theology from the Catholic University of America, founded and has directed the school since 1999.

In addition to fundamental education, students are trained in English communication, which is vital to securing employment that pays decent wages. Further, students choose a trade (i.e. electrical engineering; computer technology; plumbing; metal work and welding; etc.), which will ensure employability upon graduation. The school analyzes the labor market in Nicaragua to ensure the trades being taught match the needs of employers.

The school’s annual budget consists solely of donated funds. A grant from Holy Trinity Parish would be used to pay the salary of teachers. The budgetary needs of the school far outpace the grant; thus all funds would be spent directly on academic support.

IMPACT A grant of \$48,000 from Holy Trinity would go very far in educating the children of the barrios of Nicaragua. At a cost of \$2400 in annual salary per teacher, 20 teachers could be paid for one year, educating nearly 200 students across ages 12 through 18 years old. Thus, Holy Trinity would be directly investing in the future economic productivity of more than 100 families, providing them avenues from deep poverty and giving them ability to live economically and socially productive lives, while creating and supporting healthy families.

SUSTAINABILITY The *Instituto Tecnico Especializado Juan Pablo II* enjoys a high retention rate among its students, ensuring completion of training leading to employment. Most graduates are successful in gaining employment with decent wages.

The school has a fundraising network in the US that enables it to obtain modest support on an ongoing basis. Funds raised are aimed at increasing capacity in number of students taught. Academic support, such as that being sought in this grant, is dependent on generosity of donors. Msgr. Fonseca, school staff, the Board of Directors, and ITEJPII Chapters in the US are dedicated to raising such funds.

OPERATIONS AND TIMEFRAMES The funds from the grant would be used in the coming academic year to pay the salary of faculty so that nearly 200 students are instructed in various courses.

RISK MANAGEMENT The operation of the *Instituto Tecnico Especializado Juan Pablo II* is solely dependent on donations. While the school has a fundraising network in the US, it is very challenging to raise funds. It is not possible for the school to build reserves, both because need exceeds donation and because the government of Nicaragua taxes funds in reserve at 15% per year. Nonetheless, the school has been successful in fundraising thus far through its network and has done so since 1999. Grants enable the school to continue its operation and meet its mission of educating impoverished youth in Nicaragua.

MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY AND STRUCTURE Msgr. Fonseca has extensive experience and success in managing the *Instituto Tecnico Especializado Juan Pablo II*. Backed by the authority of the Archdiocese of Managua to ensure the school's legitimacy and fiscal responsibility, donations and grants to the school are managed effectively. A Board of Directors comprised of professional business owners, university administrators, and trade leaders from Managua governs the school.

Msgr. Fonseca is assisted in the day-to-day operations of the school by a *personal docente* (the US equivalent is a principal), and teaching staff divided into educational and technical faculty.

In several cities in the US, Msgr. Fonseca is supported by *Instituto Tecnico Especializado Juan Pablo II* chapters that serve as a fundraising group, which is registered as a 501(c)(3) (http://www.itejp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&lang=en&limitstart=15)

Finally, the school has formed an official partnership with The Catholic University of America's National Catholic School of Social Service. NCSSS provides ITEJPII with four Master of Social Work students for ten weeks each summer, while also providing faculty expertise in fundraising and organizational development. The partnership is led by Dr. William Rainford, Dean of NCSSS.

PROJECT SIZE Salary for 20 teachers @ \$2400 per teacher per year = \$48,000