

# STATISTICS IN NICARAGUA APPEAL

(RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP)

Very useful would be 5 1/4 inch floppy disks: old ones, new ones - you could all spare a few, or order an extra box of brand new ones to send on. They have a variety of printers - the most practical help would be a second hand Commodore. Just send us a variety of different ribbons, marked as to which models they serve.

A major need remains for university-level maths and statistics textbooks in Spanish and English. If you're on holiday in Spain, bring one or two home from a university bookshop to send on. Useful books are listed in the report. Statistics in Nicaragua Q2, available for \$1.00 on 41 donations from friends, colleagues and toy tax cuts), cheques payable to Nicaragua Statistics Fund. If you or someone you know is going to Nicaragua and can carry some of these things, please contact Jeff Evans, address below.

Send disks, ribbons and other donations to:

Jeff Evans (NSF)  
Middlesex Polytechnic  
Queensway  
Enfield  
Middlesex EN3 4BF

Please pin this on a suitable notice board

LOCAL COLLECTION POINT:

Statisticians, mathematicians, micro-computer users, teachers and statisticians, help your colleagues in Nicaragua. We want to send practical material aid to a country weakened by war and facing great difficulty getting things as commonplace (for us) as floppy disks, writing materials and paper.

Since ending the violent Somoza dictatorship, the Nicaraguans have made huge headway at successes in their quest for universal literacy and improved primary health care. In Nicaragua, as elsewhere, statisticians, mathematicians and computerised data handling can play a vital part in planning and evaluating development programmes, but in this the Nicaraguans are being held back. For example, the 1982 census had to be abandoned largely because the US government-backed "Contras" attacked census staff and destroyed field vehicles.

But even in this difficult time when over half of state expenditure is spent on defending the country, they are trying to gather demographic statistics, train mathematicians, statisticians and computer programmers. In 1987, ANEP, the association of statisticians, and is seeking to develop their profession and establish links with organisations in other countries.

Why help Nicaragua?

There are plenty of poor countries which need well-trained and equipped statisticians etc., you might support a country daring to show that military dictatorship can be successfully replaced with a far more egalitarian society with priorities such as universal literacy, which is as a result suffering unthinkable and illegal bullying. It is not, as the US government would have us believe, a totalitarian regime controlled from Moscow. Ask anyone who has been there.

Nicaragua's needs

With a shortage of hard currency and an economic embargo by the US government and its subservient allies (Mrs T included), everything, from pencils to torries is in short supply. The Statisticians in Nicaragua Appeal has been set up to collect and distribute solar powered calculators (solar powered because of limited availability of batteries) which were gratefully received. This time we want to focus on computer consumables. They have managed to import some micros - usually IBM PC compatibles, but these are underused because of shortages of floppy disks, printer ribbons, computer paper etc. Here many of us can lay our hands on these.

NICARAGUAN ASSOCIATION OF STATISTICIANS AND MATHEMATICIANS

For a dignified peace... A free country or death!

Steve Simpson  
Secretary  
Nicaragua Statistics Fund  
England

Dear Steve:

With great happiness I have received your letters dated 7th March in which you send me some information [about The Nicaragua workshop at the 1988 Radical Statistics Conference - SS] and ask some questions around the work that all of you in England are developing for statistics in our country, which I consider not only valiant but highly stimulating for ourselves. So I want to make clear some things that I believe will be of interest to you and which relate to your letters:

a) At present, whenever I write to friends abroad, I do it with a mind to the support which they may offer us to ensure the continuing publication of the modest journal which we are working on. By that I mean that we are requesting all that can be directed that way because we believe that with such an instrument we can win ourselves a place not only within but also outside our country. In other words, the journal will in time gain space for us, which at the moment is difficult to obtain by other means.

I don't want to hide the fact that we have had some problems with the printing of the journal itself, since what we lack is not contributions but a method of publishing them. In INEC [National Institute of Statistics and Censuses - SS] where we have had it done, the duplicator is in a bad state; this is a pity because it meant zero printing costs. At other places it costs a great deal and we do not have resources to support such an expenditure. All this is presenting us with some challenges of what to do to print the journal and we are studying the alternatives. On the other hand our governing body felt that your last letter was very opportune in that you were yourself preoccupied by this matter and indeed asked what possible support could be given us, for which we thank you. With this in mind, we think that you could help us in two ways:

(1) Sending especially electronic stencils which in our country there simply are not, or they are very difficult or expensive to come across. Paper and the rest we do not ask for because such things can be bought here. Thus we suggest to you all (if you can) to send money with stencils and that your representative which you have here in Nicaragua buys the rest: paper, card, etc.

(2) Looking in England for people or institutions which are interested in helping us regarding our journal. We have here a concrete plan for the journal itself, which is already written and think could be sent to you in the next letter if it interests you.

b) The article about Statistics in Nicaragua is almost in draft form and I am thinking to send it to you in July '88; what has slowed it down has been in part the temporary absence from the country of some of the people whom I wish to read it and to give me their professional evaluations. It depends on that now.

c) The open letter which you suggested I shall enclose with this letter and I have hope that it can help in the work which we are engaged in. Thankyou infinitely for all the efforts which have been made already concerning this. I send you both the original in Spanish and a version in English which attempts to carry its meaning as well as possible.

d) About the list of our members who may be interested in an exchange with their counterparts in England, I believe that I can ensure it in the next letter since our governing body is in a phase of some reorganisation which will give us a good idea of our membership and where it is located. As far as the list goes that you sent us, we shall reproduce it on a stencil and distribute it among all the members who may wish a contact with the colleagues who are listed there. In the next letter I shall send you a copy of the circular so that you may see it yourself.

e) There is some information which I believe it important that you know in the meantime about our circumstances:

1. We organised last march the first Day Conference on Statistics and Mathematics (poster enclosed), which was not covered in its entirety for problems of transport as on two occasions as we were travelling from Leon to Managua the bus in which some of we participants were travelling broke down and left us stranded on the way. The Conference was some 70% completed and the rest will be finished possibly in June of this year. This activity is the most productive of all that the Association has done because evidence was given of the lack of relation of our professions with the institutions of production and services and, the most incredible, between ourselves. Another thing to emerge from the activity was the unequal development (natural to expect) between Managua and Leon as it was the second which presented the more substantial and widereaching contributions which was very impressive. We are thinking of editing a review of the day conference itself, or if not then dedicating the next issue of the Journal in its entirety to the day conference.

2. As a product of such a crisis in values of the professions, in their lack of contact with institutions, it is being proposed that we set out from the classrooms and put ourselves in the institutions to work directly with them in the hope of creating some type of point of entry to facilitate the access of knowledge of what they do and how we can support them.

For example, the School of Statistics in Leon has wanted to establish working relations with Institutions in the region but this has been difficult because on the one side they do not know what we can do and we ourselves do not know how we can support them: it is a vicious circle. Thus what is being attempted in the medium term is to place a statistician in the Institution itself, full time, who can help the development of the organisation and at the same time seek out a base

for the subsequent participation of other statisticians. It is as though we were creating a type of "beach head", a point of entry which at present does not exist. In Nicaragua there is a profound lack of knowledge of what we statisticians can do and how we do it, even in the highest levels of decision-making of the revolutionary government. Of course none of this corresponds to any pre-established policy but is a consequence of underdevelopment and a broad professional ignorance. Remember that the Statistics career is relatively new in the country (it was born in 1984) and that speaks for itself.

Work in the School of Statistics in Leon continues with its usual rhythm and we are now trying to set up closer and stronger links with our colleagues in Managua who as you already know have a level of development below our own. At present I am continuing my bureaucratic work as Secretary of the Faculty of Sciences and teach the course on Calculation of Probability II to students of year 3 of the course. But my intentions in the long term are to either leave my administrative duties and stay here as a full-time teacher, or retire from the university and work in Institutions outside. We shall see what happens in the future.

I think that for the moment these are the significant things to let you know, and I believe it is of more interest that there have been efforts, and that they continue, in favour of the development of statistics in our country. I repeat once more our sincere thanks for all that you are able to do to co-support our efforts and I hope that we will continue this written correspondence as a form of maintaining permanent contact.

Always fraternally

Juan F. Rocha N.  
President, ANEM

## ASOCIACION NICARAGUENSE DE ESTADISTICOS Y MATEMATICOS

CONAPRO "HEROES Y MARTIRES"

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

Leon, May 26, 1988.

### OPEN LETTER

Dear colleagues:

I am writing to you, as President of the Nicaraguan Association of Mathematicians and Statisticians (ANEM, from its Spanish initials), created in September 1986, with the purpose of making possible, in the near future, an exchange of interests that might make room for an approach of our professional organizations.

The Association has been constituted as a consequence of the growth of the academic work in both mathematics and statistics in our country, which has been made itself manifest in the creation of two schools of mathematics and two schools of statistics (in both Managua and Leon) that have as their goals, the training -at the B.S. level- of professionals in both disciplines. All this has brought about the necessity of getting ourselves involved with the management of state and private institutions, in order to involve mathematicians and statisticians in the decision-making process and the evaluation of our incidence in those institutions.

Having made the above considerations, the Association pursues the following goals:

1. To raise -in agreement with the most urgent needs of our country- the scientific and technical level of its members, encouraging the discussion of problems and suggesting possible solutions to the interested organizations.

2. To hold meetings, panels, congresses and informal conversations about our careers, their influence in the development of our country, and the popularization of our work at all levels.

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3. To make possible the edition of a journal that ensures the diffusion of the mathematical and statistical work in Nicaragua, both in and outside Nicaragua. The 1st. number of that journal has already been issued.

At the time of the writing of this letter, the Association has 85 members.

In our opinion, any suggestion from you about the ideas presented in this letter, might help to strengthen the bonds of friendship between us, and be the starting point of a relationship of mutual cooperation that may, in the future, be beneficial for both of us.

Looking forward to hear from you soon, I remain.

Sincerely yours,



Juan F. Rocha N.  
President.  
Association of Mathematicians  
and Statisticians.

Facultad de Ciencias.  
UNAN- León.  
Nicaragua.