



2022

SWB HUB REPORT

Nicaragua Edition





“

I don't know what type of person I would be if Soccer Without Borders weren't a part of my life. I feel its influence has formed me to be who I am. To be a part of the leadership team, to feel the desire to help, to be with the girls in the program, to share with them, to listen to their desires and dreams. Soccer Without Borders hasn't changed my life, it has formed my life.

Natalia, SWB Nicaragua Graduate

2023 Update: Natalia secured a U.S. visa and work permit and joined the staff of SWB Massachusetts in June 2023.

About Soccer Without Borders



Our Mission

To use soccer as a vehicle for positive change, providing under-served youth with a toolkit to overcome obstacles to growth, inclusion, and personal success.

Our Vision

A more inclusive and equitable world where all young people have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our Culture

Our six mantras – Leave Your Shoes at the Door, We're Glad You're Here, Know the Thingy Thingy, You Play Best When You're Smiling, Get Them to the Field, and Celebrate the Pass More than the Goal – guide us to prioritize what matters most. [Learn more!](#)



About SWB Nicaragua

At SWB Nicaragua, sport, education, and leadership development go hand-in-hand. There are many factors that cause a girl in Nicaragua to drop out of school, including domestic responsibilities in the home, a financial need to work, unplanned pregnancy, and a lack of visible pathways and encouragement for women to enter the workforce and pursue their personal goals. SWB addresses these barriers through holistic, long-term programming and a future-focused culture that invites girls to "dream big" and imagine their future.



What We Do

Our Sites

Based in the city of Granada, SWB Nicaragua operates 11 teams from ages 5-20, offering activities and access to our youth center 45 weeks per year, 6 days per week. SWB also leads city-wide leagues at multiple age-groups, and implements an in-school curriculum throughout the year. Program sites include Center City Granada, La Villa, La Laguna, and Diamante.

Known as a leading organization in Nicaragua and within Latin America for getting girls in the game and training women coaches, SWB Nicaragua leads camps and coaching clinics annually within and outside of Granada including:

- Pearl Lagoon & Boaco, Nicaragua
- Barranquilla, Colombia
- Lyon, Nicaragua
- Jinotepe, Nicaragua
- Chontales, Nicaragua

The Team (Full-Time)

- Francisca Alvarez
- Fatima Lopez
- Reyna Roblero
- Veronica Balladares
- Joselyn Meneses
- Michell Guadamuz
- Lisbeth Calderon
- Helen Ramirez

Our Programs

- **TEAM Programs:** Each team is led by a trained head coach and assisted by one of our recent program graduates. A typical week includes 2-3 soccer sessions, 1-2 team-building sessions or educational workshops off the field, and 1 game, in addition to daily academic support and access to informal time at the youth center.
- **Education & Leadership Program:** Established in 2014 in memory of Tom Pope, the ELP provides a system of financial, academic, and socio-emotional support, including school scholarships, educational materials, and access to employment.
- **In-School Program:** Through a partnership with the Ministry of Education and individual schools, SWB coaches teach a soccer unit in gym classes at schools around Granada throughout the year. School gym teachers are also supported with equipment and training to form a school team to play in one of our leagues.
- **Leagues, Camps, Tournaments:** From Copa de la Paz, to the Carrera de la Niña, Copa sin Fronteras, and TEAM Camp, to School leagues and Mixed Gender leagues, SWB Nicaragua creates opportunities for hundreds of community youth to access positive soccer environments.

Resilience & Recovery: The SWB Nicaragua Education Program

The Fútbol Sin Fronteras (FSF) Education Program was established in 2014 in memory of Tom Pope, a young man who exemplified the very best of a well-rounded student-athlete with his humble nature, dedication to academics and a commitment to teamwork, compassion, and being there for his community and teammates. FSF provides educational and financial support to girls and young women who dedicate themselves to learning, teamwork, and exploring and expanding their futures.



There are many factors that may cause a girl in Granada to drop out of school. This includes domestic responsibilities in the home, a financial need to work in the market/informal economy, an unplanned pregnancy, or a lack of visible pathways and encouragement for women to enter the workforce and pursue a career.

Public school in Nicaragua is not free; uniforms are required, school supplies are required, and matriculation fees are required each year. Not only that, but public schools are overpopulated and under-staffed, meaning that quality education is more often found in private schools, which have even higher costs.

One by one, the FSF Education Program addresses the barriers faced by girls, providing school scholarships (including all supplies and uniforms) as well as access to computers, printing, tutors, school supplies, and a safe space after school to work on homework. A community of mentors and peers invested in their success create a sense of belonging and hopefulness which, in turn, strengthens resilience. Together these resources ensure that girls' school attendance is not only valuable for their own future, but can also benefit their entire family by adding additional livelihood opportunities.

Working over the last 8 years with financial support from the Tom Pope Memorial Fund, Girls Rights Project, Together Women Rise, and individual donors, and with visioning and research by Veronica Balladares, Kelly (Pope) Casey, Helen Ramirez, and the entire FSF Granada staff team, the program has expanded from a sole focus on secondary school to fully supporting one's full educational journey – from primary school to university.

FSF Education Program Results

(School Year 2022)



126

Primary, Secondary, & University scholarships



92%

Average academic advancement rate



28

Girls graduated or promoted



20

Schools attended by scholarship recipients



Resilience & Recovery: The SWB Nicaragua Education Program (cont.)

During the 2022 school year, our FSF students returned to in-person learning after two years of interrupted, distanced learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. When students in Granada returned to in-person classes, they returned to a changed and updated context, one shaded by concern, distance, and an uncertainty of their future.

In Nicaragua, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted educational structures and systems, with little digital infrastructure to serve as a backstop. One example of this disruption was that, in 2022, no public or private schools gave out regular grades, it nearly impossible to track academic progress and development.

Amidst this backdrop, our focus with the Fútbol Sin Fronteras Education Program was to provide support to our students that would allow as many girls as possible to regain and recapture the routine, predictability and stability that comes with being a student-athlete. To do this, the Education Program delivers multi-faceted support:

Safe Space

The SWB office is open throughout the week and provides a space for individualized support, access to computers, internet, and printing for homework.

Family Engagement

SWB staff complete regular home visits and phone calls to over 90 households to check on girls' progress and share program updates with families. These visits also included ongoing education on public health messaging, covid safety

Material Support

The SWB bodega is a store where girls can exchange points earned through participation food, household items, school supplies, and sport materials.

Whole-Person Approach

Our workshops this year focused on mental health, Covid precautions, and addressed themes that have become more prevalent in the pandemic such as domestic abuse. We paired our workshops, as always, with space for fun and play, and sessions were led by FSF staff and participants.

Workshops

Monthly in-person workshops with primary and secondary school scholarship recipients focused on providing skills in leadership and SEL skills (honesty, respect). Staff and youth leaders co-led these workshops, allowing for public speaking and leadership opportunities for our students.

Pathways & Perspectives Through Education

Primary Level

"I started with FSF when I was four years old. My sisters already participated and they told my mom that I should participate too. I liked playing, making friends and playing with other girls. I've received a scholarship for two years. For me and my family it's a big support because it provides all of the supplies I need to go to school. Next year, I'll be in 4th grade."

-Valeska, Primary School Scholarship Recipient



Secondary Level

"Being with FSF has changed my life in a lot of ways. That I'm hard of hearing has not been a challenge when it comes to connecting with the coaches, my teammates and the teams we play against. It fills me with pride to know that I'm capable. Here at FSF, I've grown not just as a soccer player, but also as a person and more than anything I've learned to dream big and never give up."

-Anayely, Secondary School Scholarship Recipient

University Level

"I've participated with FSF since 2014. I received a secondary school scholarship and now receive a university scholarship and study accounting. Right now, I'm an assistant coach for FC Real Piratas, I've had the opportunity to work with and share with this group for two years. FSF is essential for me; it's been a part of my life as I've grown from a girl to adolescent to adult. It's where I learned — by working with others and groups of different people — to find myself, to understand what I want to be, to not be afraid, and to take on new challenges."

-María José Canales Pérez, University Scholarship Recipient

Graduate Level

"I joined Futbol Sin Fronteras when I was 9 years old after my cousin Hassell invited me. My team was the Butterflies and I liked being on the team because I had friends, people that listened to me, my coach taught me a lot about soccer and life, and I loved coming to play soccer. I received a scholarship from FSF the entire time I was in highschool and I remember going to office hours to do my homework before going out to practice. Walking to multistadio was an adventure- walking with friends, talking about school and our lives. When I graduated high school, I was fortunate enough to continue receiving a scholarship to attend university and (as part of this scholarship) I became an assistant coach. Through this role, I had the experience to teach and share everything I'd learned since I was little. For me, being a coach was an incredible experience because I could tell that so many girls needed not just economic support, but also emotional needs, and I could listen to them and be a role model for them- of how they could be themselves, not give up, and have dreams. Thanks to FSF, I reached my academic dreams- I'm a technical specialist in banking and finance. I work and can help support my family with household costs. I'm proud of myself."

-Mariangeles Martinez Busto, Former University Scholarship Recipient, Current Technical Specialist in Banking & Finance in Granada, June 2022 graduate of INATEC



SWB Nicaragua by the Numbers

The Nicaragua Hub delivers holistic, youth-development programming throughout the year, and is designed to 'get them to the field'. We work to eliminate obstacles that too often keep girls from accessing the benefits of sport and being a part of a team. All of our programs are free of charge, coaching, equipment, and facilities are provided, and girls have access to earn equipment to keep through our Bodega point system. Learn more about the types of programs offered at SWB Nicaragua on [our website](#).

Participant Numbers

(Fiscal Year 2022)



313

TEAM Program Participants
(100% Girls)



822

Youth Served through
All Programs



80%

Retention Rate from
Year to Year



16

Youth
Leaders



70%

of Staff are
Program Alumni



93

Women Coaches Trained
Through SOMOS Equidad



Gender Identity (All Programs):
65% Female
35% Male



Participants by Age:
22% 0-8 years • 22% 9-11 years
28% 12-14 years • 22% 15-18 years • 5% 19+

Context & Impact

Nicaragua is in a state of compounding crises; a string of protests in 2018 led the country to the brink of Civil War, economic sanctions due to human rights abuses have devastated the economy, and the pandemic added another layer of isolation, uncertainty, and loss. From 2018-2022, more than 600,000 Nicaraguans have fled the country, about 10% of the total population. That more than half of SWB participants have a family member who has migrated out of Nicaragua.

In a culture rooted in machismo, girls in Nicaragua already faced tremendous barriers to success: 28% are pregnant by age 18 (the highest rate of teen pregnancy in Latin America) and 52% do not complete primary school. Due to these triplicate crises, more than 40% of non-profits in Nicaragua have been shut down, further diminishing the resources available to girls.

These challenges paint a picture of the impacts of poverty and conflict in a nation filled with creativity and potential. These challenges must be addressed at the intersection of health, culture, and education, with a focus on a new generation of girls ready to be the change.

Impact Highlights

(School Year 2022)



98%

of participants reported that they feel safe at SWB and that it's important to pursue personal goals



6

sexual health workshops led by partner Ixchen on: children's rights, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse & preventing pregnancy at an early age.



2,664

educational & sport materials "purchased" by participants at the SWB bodega,

What keeps you at SWB?

"(FSF) motivates me to develop, day by day...and shows me that you can start from scratch and go really far in accomplishing your goals."

"Over all of the years, the FSF coaches have become role models for me"

"The feeling of acceptance and support that exists for all participants, the respect given to all, the happiness that each coach brings to the program"

SWB Nicaragua Hub Highlights



Advancing Gender Equity in Latin America

Created in partnership with [Common Goal](#) and [Women Win](#) and led by Fundación Selección Colombia, SOMOS Equidad was launched with the aim to not only advance gender equity on the pitch, on the sidelines, and in orgs, but to also break down the societal mechanisms that contribute to gender inequality at large.

SWB-led workshops were one of many engaging and memorable activities that took place throughout the four day conference. In-person training, workshop sessions, a forum, and cultural sessions were held for 18+ coach captains and over 80 coaches across seven countries. [Learn more about the program.](#)

The 2022 Copa de Paz Tournament

In celebration of the International Day of Peace, SWB Nicaragua hosted its annual Copa de Paz (the Peace Cup) tournament, the only all-girls soccer tournament in the country.

Copa de la Paz is no ordinary competition. In addition to being an all-girl's tournament, Copa de Paz also includes a team award for positivity, respect, and dedication.

The 2022 edition of the cherished tournament took place in October and saw 375 participants across 20 teams take the field. This edition of the cherished girls-only tournament was supported by Bristol Link UK.

Recognizing 15 Years of Service

In December 2022, SWB Nicaragua was presented with an award by the Federación de Fútbol en Nicaragua in recognition of 15 years of contribution to the development of girls' and women's soccer and gender equity programming across the country.

Hub Director Veronica Balladares accepted the recognition, stating "we accept this and offer it to our community; parents and families, friends, donors, supporters, coaches, volunteers, and organizations who have believed in our work, but above all else, all of our participants past and present! This is thanks to you all!"



Featured Spotlights



SWB Nicaragua a Featured Grantee of Together Women Rise

SWB Nicaragua was selected as a Featured Grantee of [Together Women Rise](#) in support of the SWB Nicaragua Education & Leadership Program (ELP). This grant from Together Women Rise has played an instrumental role in helping the ELP fulfill its mission to facilitate positive school outcomes through a system of financial, academic, and socio-emotional support that empowers girls to overcome barriers to success. [Learn more](#)



If She Can See It, She Can Be It: A Spotlight on Granada FC

SWB Nicaragua has been serving girls in the city of Granada for over 14 years, providing leagues, clinics, community events, and academic support. And now, the impact of these programs can not only be felt at the grassroots and community levels, but has become an inspiration on the national stage as well. This accomplishment is due to the resurgence of Granada FC, a women's club team competing in the Nicaragua Second Division Women's League. [Learn about Granada FC](#)



SWB Nicaragua Participate in U.S. State Department Exchange

In the spring of 2022, coaches from SWB Nicaragua had the opportunity to participate in a cultural & sports exchange program hosted by the United States Department of State. In addition to touring several cities across the USA, they attended several impactful workshops designed to strengthen women's leadership and empowerment in sport.



Stay in the Know!

Get the latest news around SWB Nicaragua and all SWB hubs by visiting the "[Stories from the Field](#)" page of our website!



Our Local Partners



Boreiko Family Foundation
 Bristol Link UK
 Cruz Roja
 Federación Independiente de Granada

Girls Rights Project
 Global Rescue
 Granada FC
 Hotel Con Corazon

Ixchen
 Thomas H. Pope Memorial Fund
 U.S. Department of State-SportsUnited
 U.S. Embassy in Managua

School Partners

Special thanks to the school partners where our scholarship recipients attend:

Primary: Carlos A Bravo, Padre Misieri, Elsa Head, Guadalupe, Dezandberg Sara Mora

Secondary: Salesiano, Rios de Agua Viva, Naciones Unidas, Diocesano, San Pablo Apóstol

Primary & Secondary: Teresiano Sagrado Corazón, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

Universities: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, Universidad Hispanoamerica Granada, IND-Upoli, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA).



Financials

SWB Nicaragua has been embedded in the Granada community since 2008, and is local Hub of SWB, EIN 20-3786129. We operate as a shared service organization with centralized administrative functions, sharing the costs of these typically higher-priced functions, optimizing collective learning, and creating an economy of scale that gets more of every dollar to the ground.

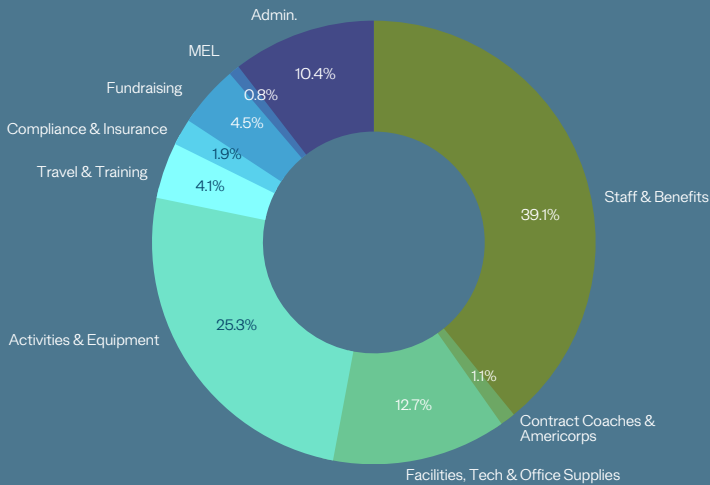
*These financials encompass Aug 1, 2021- Jul 31, 2022.
Organizational financials are independently audited by Daniel Dennis & Co.*

SWB Nicaragua

Detail Expenses: \$85,470

(2022)

Note: The 2022 budget reflects cost reductions due to travel and banking restrictions and a temporary discounting of shared service contributions



Top 5 SWB Nicaragua Revenue Sources

- Tom Pope Memorial Fund
- Together Women Rise
- Girls Rights Project
- Boreiko Family Foundation
- The Blanco Family

SWB Organization Expenses: \$3,188,847

- Direct Program: \$2,682,003 (84.1%)
- Administrative: \$346,451 (10.9%)
- Fundraising: \$160,393 (5.0%)



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Soccer Without Borders is a 501c3
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