

# NICARAGUA

## Improvements to La Chureca dump in Managua

In April 2008, RRN members wrote to President Ortega and the mayor of Managua over the horrendous conditions at La Chureca dump, Managua's municipal garbage dump.

More than 1600 workers were earning their living by scavenging for recyclable materials. One-third of those workers were children (ages 7-18). The National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) found that over 30% of the children who work in the garbage dump suffer from contamination of lead, mercury and DDT.

"Scavenger" workers staged protests because the city was picking out the most valuable scrap before depositing the rest at the dump. Walter Calderon of the Two Generations Center, a support organization for the families who live in/near the dump, described it as "pit[ting] the miserably poor municipal garbage collectors against the desperately poor scavengers of La Chureca."

Cirilo Otero, a sociologist who heads the Environmental Policy Initiatives Centre said the protest was an excellent opportunity to put an end once and for all to the slum in the dump and provide the families with a better life. **"The problem is not going to be solved by dumping 'better' garbage so that these people have something to live off of,"** he commented. "The solution is to move them out of there, train them in some trade, and insert them into a healthier and more productive life."

**"Pulling them out of there would save the lives of many of those kids, who are dying every day from eating contaminated food,"** he said.

The RRN urged the government to act quickly to find ways to move the scavenger workers out of "La Chureca" and train them so that they can be employed in productive and healthy endeavors and implement the city government agreement signed with Spain's International Cooperation Agency (AECI) to finance a project to close the dump.

### Positive development

May 2010

On May 9, La Prensa reported that, thanks to cooperation from Spain, **the landfill is being transformed.** Twenty-four hectares of the 41 hectare plot have already been leveled and covered with about 20 inches of earth. Pipes have been installed to vent the methane gas produced by decomposition of the buried garbage. Seventeen hectares of the dump will continue to receive municipal garbage until August 2011 when a processing plant, built by the Spanish company Tragsa, together with national companies, will process the trash and allow the closing of the landfill.

Compensation for the Martinez family, which owned the land, is stalled in the constitutional panel of the Supreme Court. City Council members indicated their desire to conclude the case as soon as possible.