

Nicaragua: Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer

Overview

Since 2009, the Bible Society of Nicaragua (BSN) has run the Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer project in the Manuel de Jesus Rivera Children's Hospital, or "La Mascota", the only hospital in the country to offer specialised care for children with cancer.

Through trained pastors and volunteers, BSN provides regular and ongoing spiritual support to families, with Bibles and devotional classes, plus practical assistance to cover costs associated with transport, medicine, nutrition and funerals when needed.

The Need

Unlike public healthcare in developed countries, the hospital system in Nicaragua is under resourced and unable to provide the complete level of care many patients need. Many families lack the personal resources to fill gaps left by the hospital, which compromises their child's chance of recovery.

Project Goals

The Bible Society works to offer a comprehensive support service to many disadvantaged families who struggle financially to help their child fully recover, working to address existing inequalities that are further exacerbated by ill health.

BSN project staff, trained pastors and volunteers are recognised by the hospital as an important part of the care team. Spiritual and emotional support is needed to give strength to the children undergoing treatment, as well as to their parents. Doctors at the hospital particularly depend on the project to offer pastoral support to families when their child enters palliative care, and especially as family members come to terms with the tragic early death of a child.

In 2022, the goals of the project are to reach:

- 240 pastors and volunteers, who will be trained by the project in pastoral care for children, child psychology and hand hygiene in attending to children and their families. They will also receive a free Bible.
- 2,890 children who will receive free Bibles, and be taught about God's love, comfort and hope through his word.
- 2,890 parents who will receive a free Bible so they may also understand God's love and receive encouragement and confidence.
- 125 doctors and nurses who will also receive a free Bible.
- Outpatient Children and families who attend the hospital clinic will also receive free Bible portions.

Impact

There are approximately 52,000 beneficiaries per year, inclusive of hospital patients, their families and medical staff at the hospital. This project helps children with cancer to understand God's love through his word and receive comfort and hope.

Together with their parents, children receive spiritual strength through praying, reading and learning the word of God. At the end of each year, BSN consults hospital staff and parents to gauge the effectiveness of the project.

Testimonies

"It is indescribable, the pain of living with the diagnosis of cancer in my only two children; our faith has been tested and polished like gold. Today we can say thank you very much to God for the second opportunity of life that he has given to our children and to us as parents. As a family we have been through the strongest test. With our Bible that we received for free, we learned to wait on God, to know that his promises are alive in our lives. Today I want to say thank you on behalf of my family, for all the support provided."

- Adolfo, a father of two children both diagnosed with leukemia and now in remission.

Prayer Needs

- Pray for God's provision of health and protection to the hospital patients and their families.
- Pray that the families reached through this project will continue seeking God in prayer and grow in confidence in their faith.
- Pray for God's blessing on the pastors and volunteers who serve patients and their families in this project, especially that God would increase their courage, faith, conviction and discernment to provide spiritual help and hope through the Bible.