



# FUNDACION RUACH

Fundacion Cristiana Comunitaria para Personas con Discapacidad

## 12<sup>th</sup> Ruach Newsletter (August 2020):

### “Ruach Optics”, our new project to gain financial independence

Due to lockdown and enforced self-isolation we have not been able to go out into society as much as we would have wanted to during the last months, as creating goodwill through our outreach work is such a vital part of our ‘mission’. However, it has given us more time to plan for the long-term future of our Foundation. In spite of having achieved a lot during the past 4 years, (later this month we’ll celebrate our 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary), we still rely quite heavily on international donors. In our 10<sup>th</sup> Newsletter (Feb 2020) we mentioned our plans to start a spectacles shop in Juigalpa. In this letter we will explain ‘why’ and will inform you about our campaigns in the autumn to raise money for the ‘Ruach Optics’ project. But we start with the on-going story of our attempts to “Let Manuel (legally) Be” which appears to be harder work for us than to “Let Him Be Who He Is”.

#### Legal citizenship for Manuel?

One of our core members Manuel was not registered at birth, a phenomenon not exceptional in Nicaragua, especially if the parents are poor, live far away from a registration office, and the child concerned has a disability. But it means that he cannot apply for an identity card, he cannot prove who he is and is excluded from formal ways of participating in society. Ruach is now trying to have Manuel recognized as a legal citizen. It has already taken us a lot, yes a lot, of effort! The story so far:

**Aug 2019:** Manuel’s father Napoleon visits the Municipality Registry Office and is given a long list of documents he would need to provide.

*(Dad Napoleon’s heart sunk into his boots).*

**Feb 2020:** Napoleon tries a different channel via the Electoral Council. A friendly clerk decides that fewer documents would suffice, because Napoleon qualifies as a single parent: he was never officially married and his wife has died. *(Napoleon now a lot happier, as the new requirements seemed do-able)*

**March/early April 2020:** Napoleon submits a witness statement drawn up and sent to the authorities by a solicitor declaring that Manuel was not registered at birth. Authorities confirm that indeed Manuel is not registered in any population register. *(Step 1 of 3 successfully completed)*

**May 2020:** Step 2 is the request to the police to investigate whether Manuel exists. Because of the corona virus pandemic, Napoleon could no longer follow-up on the next stage of the process.

Therefore, Astrid visits the police station to make

the same official request. The case ends up in weeks of bureaucratic delay. Plan B is enacted: Astrid phones someone working at the police whom she had been working with before. Sooner than expected the police visits our home to see and talk to Manuel with some of our staff as witnesses. Three days later we collect the official document that Manuel exists. *(Step 2 of 3 completed!)*

**July 2020:** step 3 is for the Court to decide whether Manuel can belatedly be registered. Astrid at first was allowed to make the official request, accompanied by the required paperwork, submitted in triplicate. However, the reply came quickly, but not the one we wanted. After all, father Napoleon would have to make the request and submit the paperwork in person *(On we go!)*.

We hope dad Napoleon will soon be able to travel again, but another ‘plan B’ is already in the making!



‘Awesome’ Manuel!

## **‘Ruach Optics’: our second dream!**

Four years ago the Ruach Foundation was established with a big dream to truly make a difference in the lives of our intellectually limited brothers and sisters in Juigalpa. Four years on: who could have imagined that so much of what we dreamt about 4 years ago has borne fruit!

Now we have a **second dream** to start an optical business in Juigalpa to reduce our financial dependence on donors from abroad. Just imagine how great it would be if we can say in 3 or 4 years from now: “It’s no longer a dream, it’s reality!”.



***Ruach Home Community supports Ruach Optics***

### **Why start an income generating business?**

The short answer is that the social programmes of the Ruach Foundation (Community Home, Activities Centre, outreach work, including advice and training) will never sustain themselves, no matter how well we guard our resources. Ruach addresses the most urgent and dire needs which come our way, irrespective of whether potential beneficiaries can pay their way. The Ruach Foundation therefore does not expect the families of Ruach’s seven core community members or the participants of the Activities Centre to fully cover the expenses for the services they receive. Families pay in kind or cash whatever they can. The Activities Centre produces some marketable products, but the income of its sales is only a fraction of the running costs of the Centre. Ruach’s outreach work is not an income-spinner either, although through this work Ruach has established a network of supportive friends among whom there are many who provide help in kind or for reduced fees, including e.g. medical help (doctor, dentist), hairdressing, transport, etc.

### **Why start a spectacles shop/optical business?**

The Board of the Ruach Foundation have thought for several years about the most realistic way of generating independent income. As time went by, it became increasingly clear that starting an optical

business would be the best option, given the existing optical expertise in the Ruach Board and its network of well-wishers. We’ve also had contact with eye-doctors and opticians in our circle because some of our core members have eye- and sight problems, including Rommel, our core member who joined the community a few months ago.



***Does anyone like Rommel’s new glasses? He does!***

There is clearly a market for a popular and cheaper spectacles shop in this part of Nicaragua as according to the Ministry of Health about 68% of the Nicaraguan population has vision problems. Our aim for Ruach Optics is to fill this gap in the market for the benefit of people with lower incomes, by offering appropriate eye care, frames and lenses while generating enough profit to feed back into our social programmes. Our own study revealed that a vast majority of people living in the regions around Juigalpa said that they would use ‘Ruach Optics’ if it were to provide services at an affordable price.

### **Ruach Optics fund-raising campaigns this autumn**

To start a proper optician business we cannot do without an initial investment in equipment, and a stock of glasses frames and lenses, estimated to be \$40,000, a big ask. Therefore, currently we, (Astrid, Ruach’s coordinator; her daughter Daniella in Ecuador; and Eric Jager in Sherborne, UK) are planning to participate in two regular Global Giving campaigns; these are the ‘**Little by Little Matching campaign**’ held from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> September, and the ‘**Giving Tuesday campaign**’ on 1<sup>st</sup> December. Eric hopes to rake up local interest for those campaigns by two long-distance charity runs on 12 September (for a local charity) and on 7 November, (his 4<sup>th</sup> Ruach run). He will raise his ‘distance bar’ higher again, (after his 50 km race in his flat Dutch hometown in 2019), by running 53 km up and down the white cliffs of Dorset (no, not Dover!) in a UK trail event.

### **Can you spare £5, €5 or \$10 between 14-18 Sep?**

Normally we do not make specific requests for donations through our Quarterly Newsletters. And we do plan to contact you in different ways about

the forthcoming campaigns. However, exceptionally we'd like to draw your attention to how a little gift of £5, €5 or \$10 can make a BIG difference in the Little by Little Matching campaign. This campaign is designed to attract small amounts from as many donors as possible. Therefore, besides matching any gift up to \$50 by 50%, Global Giving will also be offering extra bonus prizes of \$2000, \$1000, \$500, \$300 or \$100 for the 5 charities which will attract the 'most unique donors'. If only we can organize our supporters (and friends of supporters?!) into donating a little by debit/credit card between 14-18 Sep, we're in for a chance to take home a bonus prize! The link to the appropriate Global Giving page for project 44295: 'Ruach Optics' is: <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/project-ruach-optics>.

## Two special donations for Ruach

### Books4Life Groningen, The Netherlands

Early August Vivir Juntos, our Dutch mother foundation, received a more than expected amount from **Books4Life Groningen**. Books4life is a second hand book store run by volunteers in Groningen, 'the capital of the North of the Netherlands'. They collect and sell *good books* with profits going to 'good causes' including Amnesty International, Oxfam Novib and a variety of small charities. In February Ruach was chosen after a process of voting via Facebook as the favorite among four small charities, and Ruach received the top prize! The money received will be spent on diapers, medicines, and salaries for our staff running the night shifts in our home. Astrid wrote to Books4Life: "When you give from the goodness of your hearts, you will always gain, because life is like an echo: whatever you give, gets back to you!"

### A gift from a psychiatric prisoner who died

In our Newsletters we have occasionally written about Astrid's friend of many years, Henk (not his real name) who lives in a psychiatric prison in the Netherlands. Due to COVID-19 his regular 'good meal for a good cause' evenings, for inmates, staff and visitors, to raise money for Ruach had to stop, but Henk will start again as soon as regulations will permit. Henk was recently contacted by a very ill inmate who had been involved with Henk's Ruach work for some time with a request to give him the details of Ruach's bank \$-account in Juigalpa. A week later the inmate passed away. He left whatever money he had to Ruach. We do not know his name; we do not know the 'value' of his estate. **But we do know that his gift is invaluable to us!**

## Global Giving's photo contest

We try our hand at anything to spread the news about our work and to have a chance to earn a few extra dollars. So in July we entered two photos in GG's photo contest for which we selected the cover photograph of Ruach's two projects with Global Giving, shown below with the captions.

### **Project 'Ruach Optics' (Project number 44295):**



*Open your eyes, really see one another. We are all worthy of being seen: with or without disabilities; with or without special tools. 'Ruach Optics' will help reach exactly that!*

### **Improve the rights of disabled adults in Nicaragua (project number 28192)**



*Together, celebrating life! The Ruach Foundation helps to make life better for people with special needs in Nicaragua. We want society to see and hear them!*

A jury will select the best 100 pictures which will then be featured prominently on the Global Giving website with distribution of prizes decided by a public vote. We're expecting to hear soon whether one of our pictures is shortlisted. If successful, we let you know how you can vote for us!

Our 13<sup>th</sup> Newsletter will be issued early November.

***Your involvement means the world to us.  
Together we can make a difference!***

#### **For more information:**

#### **Websites:**

- 1 <https://www.facebook.com/fundacionruach/>
- 2 <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/fundacionruach>
- 3 <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/project-ruach-optics/>
- 4 [www.vivirjuntos.nl](http://www.vivirjuntos.nl)

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