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## Promoting Justice and Advocacy

Often when I mention that I work with World Renew, most people immediately think of responding to disasters around the world. World Renew certainly does that, from earthquakes in Katmandu to forest fires in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Some others immediately think of long-term agriculture, health, and infrastructure projects in far-off countries. A few even use the word “transformation” in their understanding as they pull in the complexities of leadership training, community organizing, and gender empowerment. World Renew’s five-year strategic plan affirms all this, and I have shared with you how this is taking place in Nicaragua through newsletters over the years. What is less known, however, is World Renew’s passion for “justice and advocacy” that is a third pillar in the strategic plan.

Promoting justice is complicated and can be interpreted in many ways. In Nicaragua we interpret this as “giving voice to the marginalized.” Nicaragua has an elaborate legal code, but the application is questionable. A popular saying goes, “*Un pobre hasta por una gallina condena, y el rico no*” (“A poor person goes to jail for stealing a chicken, while a rich person always gets off”). Money talks, and the people who will take bribes range from the police officer, who barely makes a hundred dollars a month, to the local judge. And the people who are most vulnerable to exploitation are those that are naïve or can’t afford to get professional help.

One of the ways World Renew in Nicaragua promotes justice and advocacy is through our partnership with the Christian Center for Human Rights (CCDH). This small grassroots organization mobilizes lawyers who volunteer their time to make legal aid available to people who are “outside” of the formal justice system. Through providing counsel, facilitating mediation, or representing a client in court, justice is being served. Most cases are simple but have significant consequences for those involved—for example, in matters such as land disputes, unfair dismissal by an employer, and, sadly, a disproportionate share of domestic violence cases.

Two years ago Tania Chavarria took a job in an auto parts store. To avoid having to pay obliga-



tory employee benefits and employer deductions, the employer paid her in cash, averaging about \$75 a month, which is below the minimum wage, and which often varied, depending on the generosity of her employer. Tania, being a single mother of two children, needed the money, so \$75 was better than nothing at all, so she faithfully hung on to this job. One day she was told that she wasn’t needed any longer. Through a connection, she presented her case to Rosa Maria Díaz, the CCDH lawyer in her town. Rosa Maria educated Tania on her rights as an employee to a minimum wage and a severance payment. When her former employer did not want to comply, Rosa Maria went to bat for Tania and took the case to the Government Ministry of Labour, which enforced the payment of unpaid wages and severance.

CCDH facilitated over a thousand cases in 2015. Though World Renew’s role is very much in the background, we fund CCDH training events, facilitate learning exchanges, and support some of the logistical costs. The real heroes are people like Rosa Maria who are on the front lines. World Renew has a passion to see communities transformed, and this is possible only when everyone participates and contributes. Thank you for supporting World Renew and for your part in promoting a more just society.

### Tweets by @worldrenew\_nic

 **WorldRenew Nicaragua** @worldrenew\_nic  
Praise God that the rains have finally come! #Pray that it is the end of the two year long drought along the pacific coast. #PrayMonday

 **WorldRenew Nicaragua** @worldrenew\_nic  
Lord we #pray for rain as we continue to cope with the 3rd year of drought. #praymonday #climatechange #drought

