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NICANOTES

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NicaNotes: Good Infrastructure Makes People's Lives Better

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The Kilambé bridge across the Coco River in Wiwilí municipality, Jinotega Department, was inaugurated on March 21. The population formerly experienced isolation and precariousness each rainy season when the Coco River rose and the river could not be crossed. (Photo: J. Cajina, El 19 Digital)

According to the international financial institutions, Nicaragua stands out because it completes projects in an efficient and timely manner. On Dec. 7, 2022, the President of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), Dante Mossi, stated that “Nicaragua is the country [in Central America] with the best execution rate for projects. It is the country with the best highway

infrastructure. We congratulate Nicaragua for accepting the electrical mobility challenge and quickly installing 60 charging stations for electric vehicles, showing its great commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development.” The Nicaragua Government and CABEL are currently carrying out 28-projects totaling more than US\$1.89 billion for infrastructure, environmental protection, and the fight against poverty.

And the president of the Association of Nicaraguan Transporters, Marvin Altamirano, agrees, saying that Nicaragua has the best roads in Central America, greatly facilitating land trade. Altamirano said that the Central American Transportation Federation recognizes Nicaragua’s effort and work in facilitating trade.

With the support of CABEL, Nicaragua is executing 24 public sector projects. CABEL has supported the generation of more than 113,000 jobs in the last two years in key areas of the economy such as construction, health, agriculture, and tourism, among others. Development projects have improved the quality of life of

thousands of Nicaraguans with access to electricity, health care, drinking water and modernized road infrastructure.

On April 27 of this year, the second section of the Rosita to Bonanza highway in the North Caribbean was inaugurated. This new 30-kilometer road of hydraulic concrete provides a safe, stable, fast, and comfortable connection between the development poles of the Mining Triangle and the Pacific Region. It will be an important artery of development, peace, and prosperity for families, benefiting 65,681 people.

The 25-meter-long Kilambé bridge across the Coco River in Wiwilí municipality, Jinotega department, was inaugurated on March 21 with a cost of US\$2.52 million and is benefiting 89,039 people. This helps the population who experienced isolation and precariousness each rainy season when the Coco River rises. Financing for the project came from the General Budget.

The National Port Authority (EPN) inaugurated the new port complex in Puerto Sandino, León department, on

Feb. 10. EPN President Virgilio Silva stated that “the US\$64 million project seeks to improve services for importers and exporters through modernization of equipment and technological innovation, offering companies greater fluidity and quality of service.”

Until recently, it took more than 40 minutes to travel from Tipitapa (near Managua) north to San Benito on the two-lane Pan-American highway. In October, the expansion to four lanes cut travel time by at least half. The new highway includes the San Jacinto traffic circle where highways meet that take travelers to the north and east. The expansion reduces traffic congestion for the 15,000 vehicles that circulate in this area daily, contributes to passenger safety and cargo transportation, reduces operating costs, and improves the connection of the populations to the north and east to the capital.

Improvements in Water and Sewage

On Jan. 19, the Nicaragua Water and Sewage Company (ENACAL) announced that 92% of the population has

drinking water service, while in 2006 only 65% of homes had potable water. In 2023, 40 more water projects will be inaugurated. In San Juan del Sur, Rivas department, ENACAL inaugurated a project to improve and expand the sanitation system benefitting 18,000 people. The US\$2.5 million project was financed by the General Budget with support from the Inter-American Development Bank. [A major water project for the city was completed some five years ago.]

CABEI presented a report in April on advances in the Project to Expand Potable Water and Sanitation Systems in seven cities benefiting 265,000 people with safe and continuous access to potable water. CABEI President Dante Mossi stated that “CABEI supports Nicaragua in its work towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal Six, which includes guaranteeing availability and sustainable management of potable water. It is very satisfying to see how these projects completely change people’s lives, especially in cities that for the first time have access to these services.”

The government is investing US\$185 million in the department of Managua in potable water and sewage. The Managua South Side water and sanitation project includes 230 kilometers of new pipes in Managua and in Tipitapa – 109 km of pipes, three pumping stations and one treatment plant; in Ciudad Sandino – 130 km of pipes, two pumping stations, one treatment plant and five anaerobic digesters used in wastewater treatment. More than 280,000 families will benefit. By the end of 2023 urban areas will have 97% drinking water coverage.

A project to improve and expand the potable water system in Santo Tomás del Norte municipality, Chinandega department, benefiting 2,300 inhabitants has been inaugurated. The US\$493,150 project was financed by the General Budget. The Nicaraguan water company has built a major new well with its respective pumping equipment and installed 2,600 meters of water pipes, improving drinking water service for 15,000 people in eight neighborhoods of Estelí.

Geothermal Energy

On August 2 the digital media outlet Energy portal.eu published an article titled “Exploring the Potential of Geothermal Energy in Nicaragua’s Sustainable Future.” With approximately 70% of electricity now coming from renewable sources, geothermal energy has the potential to further transform the energy landscape. “Nicaragua is uniquely positioned to capitalize on the potential of geothermal energy, thanks to its location along the Central American Volcanic Arc, and has an estimated capacity to generate up to 1,500 MW of geothermal energy.” Geothermal energy currently represents 15% of the electricity generated from renewable sources. It has helped to decrease reliance on fossil fuels, lowered greenhouse gas emissions, improved the reliability of the national grid and reduced energy costs. Nicaragua serves as a model for other countries looking to harness the power of the earth’s natural heat to build a more sustainable future.”

Housing

From 2007 to date, the Sandinista government has built more than 130,000 homes, as reported by the co-director of the Nicaraguan Institute of Housing (INVUR), Gabriela Palacios. Palacios indicated that 7,400 houses are planned for this year. As of August, 3,000 were complete, 2,600 were under construction and more than 1,900 houses were about to be built.

The national population and housing pre-census carried out in May and June by the National Institute of Development Information (INIDE) revealed that the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty housing has been reduced. Irene Alvarez, INIDE director explained that the national pre-census found that 6.4% of the population live in extreme poverty dwellings, down from 6.9% in 2016. At the national level there are 4.3 people per dwelling. INIDE also estimates that there are 1.6 million dwellings in the country, which indicates a greater number of homes

compared to the last census in 2005. In relation to property tenure, the pre-census indicates that 88% of the houses are owned by the residents. The full census will be carried out in April of 2024.

Electricity Coverage

National electricity coverage was 99.341% at the end of July 2023, with 70% generation based on renewable sources. Nearly ten thousand electrification projects have been carried out over the last 15 years, benefiting 3.6 million people through coverage that has expanded from 54% in 2007 to 99.34% today.

The accumulated investment by the Sandinista government in the energy sector to date is US\$4 billion, said Salvador Mansell, head of the National Electricity Transmission Company (ENATREL). Half a billion dollars has been invested in building the country's interconnected electricity system (or grid). He also announced that at the end of this year, a large

solar plant will be built in Malpaisillo. The construction of a gas plant with the company New Fortress is already 95% complete. Currently electricity coverage is 99.36% with work being done on new substations, as well as modernization of some of those already built.