

The
PULSERA
Project



What is The Pulsera Project?

- The Pulsera Project is a nonprofit organization that connects Central American artists with students in the U.S. through the sale of colorful handwoven bracelets, or “pulseras,” in U.S. schools.
- Students learn about fair trade, social issues in Latin America, and promote global citizenship in their classrooms.
- Funds raised from pulsera sales benefit pulsera artists and their communities through employment, education, and empowerment.



Where Does The Pulsera Project Work?



The Pulsera Project works with over 100 artists in Nicaragua and Guatemala, both south of Mexico in Central America. The majority of Pulsera Project artists live in Nicaragua, where the project originally began in 2009.

Nicaragua

- Nicaragua is roughly the size of Ohio.
- Known as the “land of lakes and volcanoes,” Nicaragua is home to beautiful beaches, lush rainforests, diverse wildlife, and famously friendly & happy people.
- In economic terms, Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the hemisphere, behind Haiti. Despite their economic circumstances though, the people of Nicaragua are rich in spirit, culture, and kindness, and Nicaragua ranks #8 on the “Happy Planet Index.”



Guatemala

- Guatemala literally means “the place of many trees” in the indigenous Mayan language.
- Guatemala is wealthier than Nicaragua but many indigenous groups are isolated from general society.
- Coffee, Sugar, and Bananas are Guatemala’s main exports, similar to Nicaragua and other Central American countries.



“Zonas Francas”

- Zonas Francas, or “free trade zones” are generally referred to as ‘sweatshops’ in English. These are large factories where thousands of people work to make everything from cardboard to jeans to electronics.
- Over 150,000 Nicaraguans and even more Guatemalans work in Zonas Francas.
- While the pay can be comparably good, the hours are usually extremely long and conditions can be unhealthy and dangerous.
- Zonas Francas rarely provide the opportunity for higher education or advancement and rely on cheap, replaceable labor to operate and make a profit.



Where do the Nicaraguan Artists Work & Live?



Nicaraguan Artists



Where do the Guatemalan Artists Work & Live?



- #1. Cajolá
- #2. Sololá

Guatemala Artists



“MayaMam Weavers” is women's cooperative in Cajolá. The women weave designs passed down from their Mayan ancestors that symbolize parts of the Mayan creation story. Those are the pulseras seen in the background of this slide.



The Pulsera Project also works with the “Sanik” cooperative in Sololá, a beautiful area in the highlands of Guatemala near Lake Atitlán. The women use the traditional art of backstrap weaving, which has been passed down through generations, to express their cultural identity and to generate an income for their families.

The Artists

- As you can see, The Pulsera Project works with people from all over - rural areas, small towns, and large cities. They all have a common desire to improve their lives but often lack the skills, education, or transportation to find good jobs, which are already in short supply in many of these areas.
- Most Pulsera Project artists are between 20 and 40 years old and most have families.



Making a Difference

- The Pulsera Project buys bracelets, purses, and headbands from these artists, providing them with well-paying fair trade jobs plus scholarships, healthcare, and access to housing for them and their families.
- All of the funding for the project comes from pulsera sales led by student & teacher volunteers across the country. The vibrant art of pulsera-making has become a way to raise awareness about social issues in Latin America while empowering hundreds of people in Central America.



Investing in Bright Futures

- In addition to sustaining jobs for over 100 artists, all proceeds are put towards the Pulsera Project's mission to educate & empower people through scholarships, secondary education, healthcare, social programs, human rights initiatives, environmental initiatives, and much more.
- Additional proceeds are also invested in small community-based Central American "social enterprises"—businesses that work to address problems in communities rather than focus solely on profits.

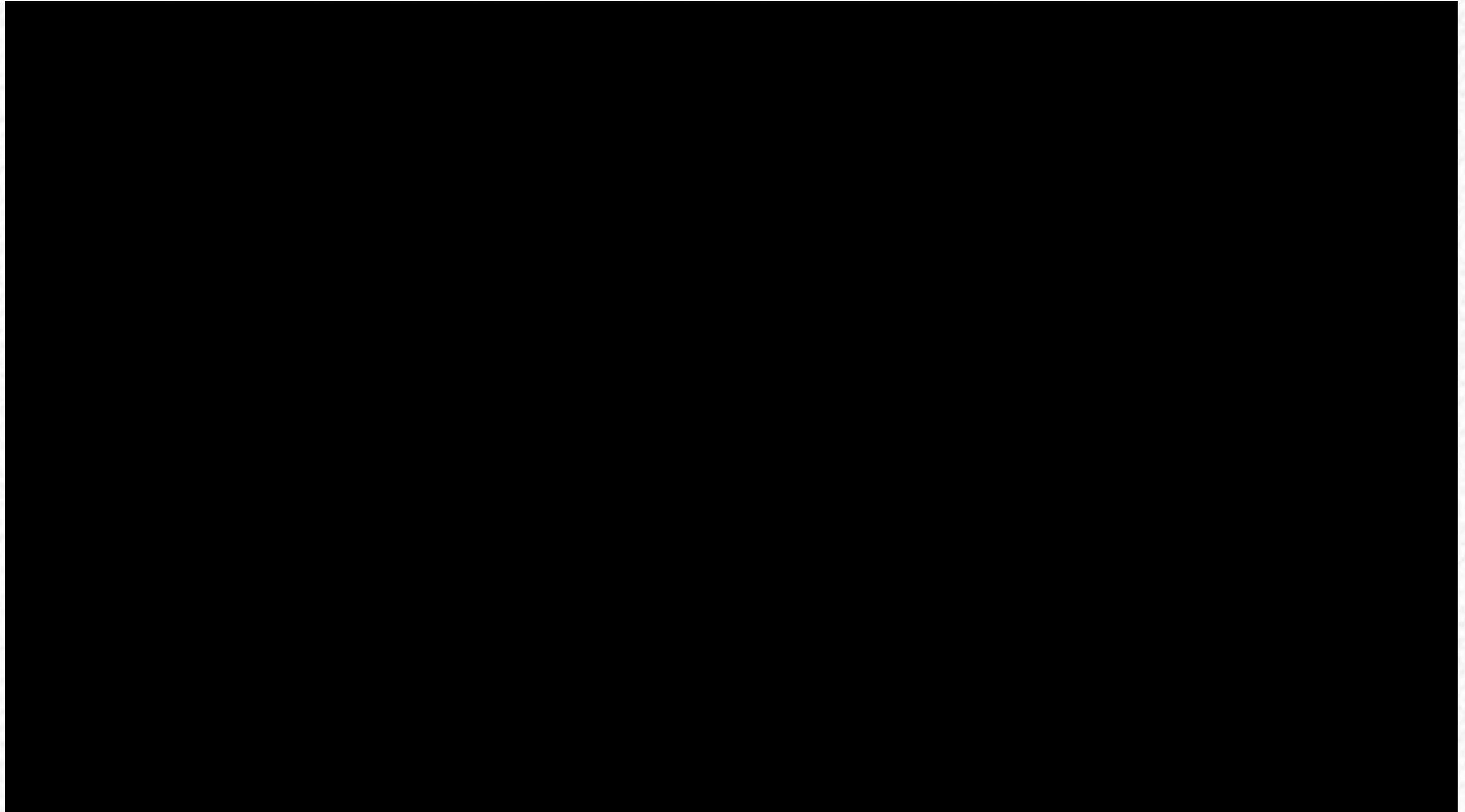


Students at "La Esperanza Granada," one of the Pulsera Project's secondary education partners.



Former pulsera artist Mercedes Altamira in front of the land & house she was able to build with funds from the Pulsera Project's housing program.

Color the World Video



<https://vimeo.com/51618703>

Pulsera Philosophy

- **A hand up is better than hand-out:** giving people physical things is not nearly as valuable as providing them with the skills and opportunities to take control over their own lives. Empowerment means creating sustainable solutions that last over the course of a lifetime, rather than one-time material donations that eventually run out or wear down.
- **Service is a two way street:** We have just as much to learn from the people we serve in other countries as we have to offer them.
- **Poverty is not just economic:** Similar to the point above, people who live in economic poverty can be extremely rich in other ways. Central Americans have a strong focus on family & community, a slower and more relaxed pace of life, a rich & colorful culture, and tend to value personal relationships over material goods.