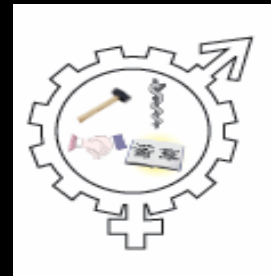


Promoción de Salud y Seguridad de Trabajadores (PROSSTRAB): A union-medical school partnership for improving occupational health in Nicaragua



Aurora Aragón, PhD, Lylliam López MPH

Facultad de Ciencias Médicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua - León, Nicaragua

Miguel Ruíz, Rubén Sandino

Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores José Benito Escobar, CST-JBE, Managua, Nicaragua

*Belinda Forbes, Susanna Rankin Bohme, AM., Marion Billings, MSc, David Egilman
Global Health through Education Training and Service (GHETS)*

Linking Workers and Health Professionals

- **PROSSTRAB**, (Promotion of Workers' Health and Safety) was created in 2003 as a unique intersectoral partnership to improve worker and community health.



Linking Workers and Health Professionals

PROSSTRAB brings together:

- A University Research Center and
- A Union Confederation

To work toward prevention and treatment
of occupational health problems in
Nicaragua



PROSSTRAB Partners

Union Confederation of Workers “José Benito Escobar” (**CST-JBE**)

- An alliance of 14 union federations representing workers across western Nicaragua.



PROSSTRAB Partners

- **Center for Research in Worker and Environmental Health (CISTA)**
- Located in the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the **National Autonomous University of Nicaragua at León (UNAN-León)**



PROSSTRAB Partners

- **Global Health through Education, Training and Service (GHETS)**, a US-based non-profit, was instrumental in founding PROSSTRAB and continues to provide technical and financial support.



PROSSTRAB Partners

- PROSSTRAB's model emphasizes exchange between partners
- Workers learn from medical researchers and health care professionals
- Healthcare professionals and researchers learn from workers

UNION

The diagram consists of two red-outlined rectangular boxes connected by a large blue double-headed arrow. The left box contains the word 'UNION' in red. The right box contains the text 'UNIVERSITY & MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS' in red, arranged in three lines. The background features a dark blue gradient with several thin, curved blue lines and small blue dots on the left side.



UNIVERSITY
&
MEDICAL
PROFESSIONALS

PROSSTRAB Activities

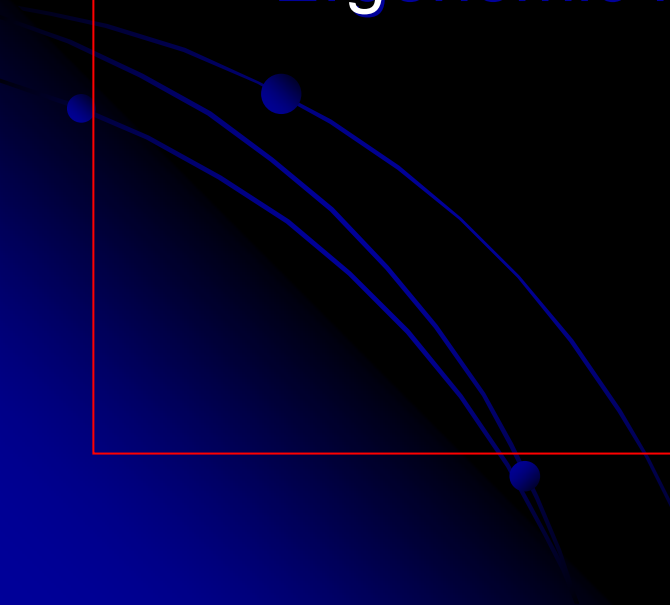
Together, the PROSSTRAB partners are working to:

- **Train** workers and healthcare providers on occupational health prevention.
- Improve the **quality of and access to healthcare** for workers
- **Educate the Nicaraguan public** about the health and safety risks workers face,
- **Establish alliances** with government agencies and community groups,

The Nicaraguan Context

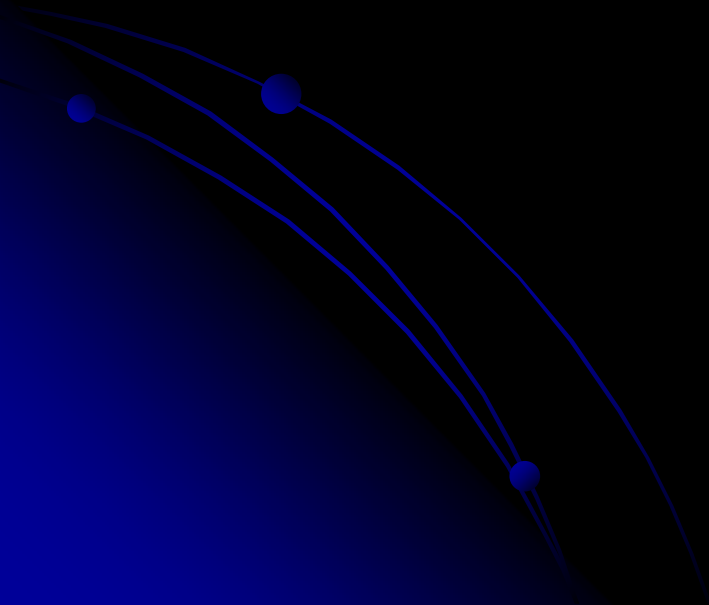
- Nicaragua faces a precarious economic situation.
- Nicaragua's participation in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) of the World Bank trades debt relief for a development plan emphasizing accelerated industrialization and the opening of the economy to the international market.
- We are competing in a global market with cheap labor and a limited capacity to monitor and control the conditions of production.

Risks faced by Workers

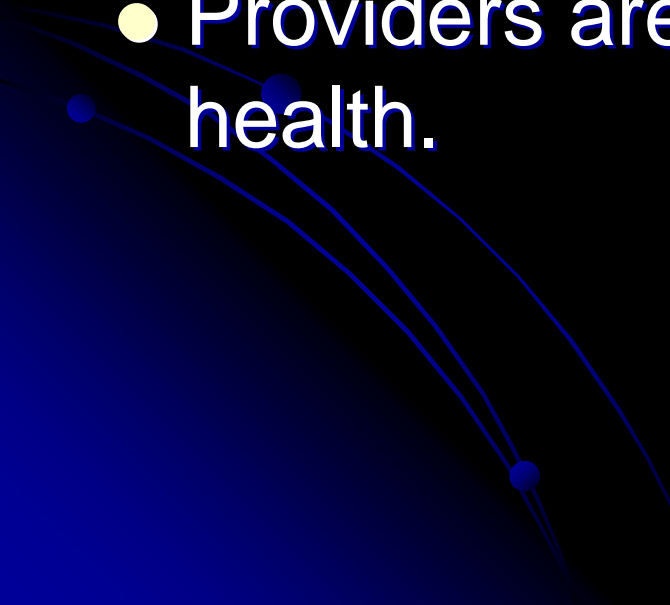
- Chemical agents like pesticides in agriculture
 - Carcinogenic substances
 - Physical agents like noise, extreme temperatures and dust
 - Ergonomic risks
- 

Regulations and enforcement

- The Nicaraguan government has enacted occupational health regulations
- But does not have adequate resources to enforce those laws.



Access to treatment

- Workers have little access to health care services
 - Informal sector workers have limited access to health care
 - Providers are not trained in occupational health.
- 

Training



- We have trained **300 workers and labor leaders** in multi-day trainings on occupational health and safety

Training

Union and University members jointly develop and implement training

- Trainees are drawn from the member unions of CST-JBE
- By training union leaders, PROSSTRAB helps build commitment to health across the board in labor organizations.

Training

- PROSSTRAB also works with the Ministry of Health, and has provided healthcare worker safety training to 40 employees of hospitals and primary care clinics run by the Ministry.



Train-the-Trainer Model

- PROSSTRAB-trained workers, together with CST-JBE personnel, in turn provided basic training to 650 workers and management personnel

in the *maquila*, plastic, metal, construction, food and hotel, and service and retail sectors.



Train-the-Trainer Model



- Trainers focus on their own workplaces, working with the “Mixed commission” there.
- Mixed Commissions are government-mandated committees formed of managers and employees that address occupational health issues.
- By training workers, PROSSTRAB helps ensure that Mixed Commissions are active, effective, and worker-centered.

Training Results in Tangible Improvements

- At Productos Metalicos, S.A., PROSSTRAB training has resulted in an increase in the use of hearing protection among the 126 workers, and a reduction of trip and fall hazards, as well as a generally increased emphasis on work safety.



Training Results in Tangible Improvements

- Workers and management at the textile *maquila* Guanica, S.A. report improvements in safety and hygiene for approximately **1600 workers** including ergonomic improvements, protective equipment, and fire prevention and response systems.



Training Results in Tangible Improvements

- Health and Safety is cited as an important issue by maquila workers
- Concerns about health have been key to their successful efforts at unionization



Training Results in Tangible Improvements

- **Ninety-two workers at a brick factory, Ladrillo San Pablo, were provided with protective equipment including gloves, masks, and boots following efforts by PROSSTRAB-trained leaders.**



Medical Services

UNAN-León houses the only specialty occupational health clinic in Nicaragua, which offers integrated healthcare to workers, including medical and occupational risk evaluations that identify and address workplace-related illness and injury



Medical Services

- PROSSTRAB also provides some workplace health screening and risk evaluation services to *maquila* and steel industry workers.



Medical Training

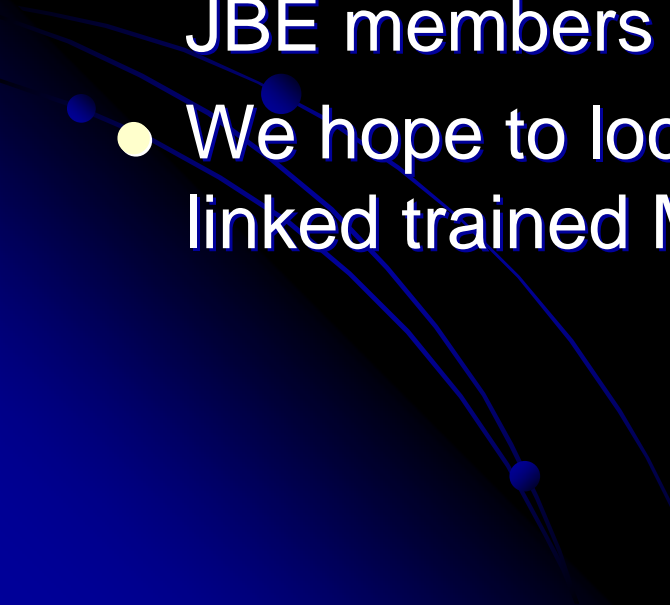
- CISTA faculty members have offered a course in occupational health at UNAN-Leon

- Students conduct research at local workplaces,

learning about occupational health through talking with workers and researching risks.



Medical Training

- We are also offering a certificate program in occupational health to practicing medical doctors
 - This will address the scarcity of professionals trained in occupational health and increase the pool of health care providers available to CST-JBE members
 - We hope to locate a clinic at CST-JBE offices, linked trained MDs with union members
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Advocacy



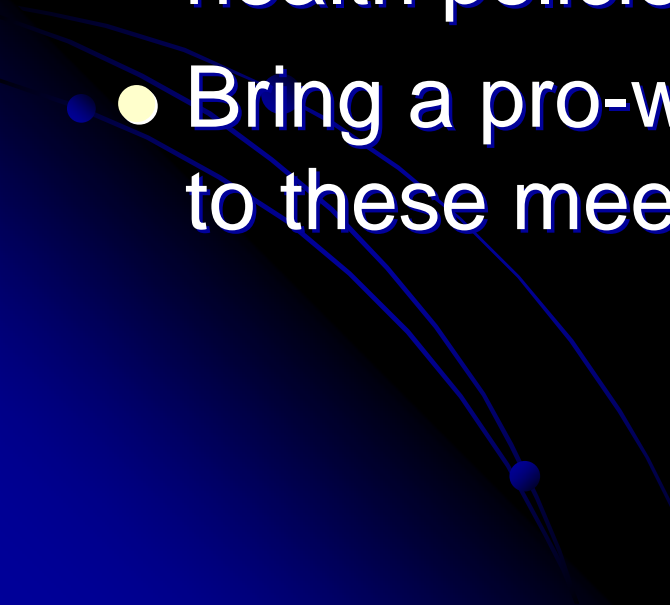
- PROSSTRAB's Occupational Safety and Hygiene (OSH) Council is a 30-member advocacy and monitoring group concerned with the health and safety of workers affiliated with CST-JBE

Advocacy

Council members

- Represent various industries
- Are active in promoting occupational health at their own workplaces
- Meet monthly to develop responses to workplace health issues, deepen understanding of legal and medical issues, develop strategies for advocacy.

Advocacy

- PROSSTRAB members also participate in the **National Labor Hygiene and Safety Council**, a federal body convened for input and discussion of occupational health policies
 - Bring a pro-worker, informed perspective to these meetings.
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Linking Sectors: 2007 Forum

Primer encuentro de trabajadores
CST-JBE y estudiantes de
Medicina de UNAN-León
*"Análisis y soluciones a los problemas de
Seguridad e Higiene"*

 **GHE**
CONSERVATION, FOOD
FOUNDATION

- **PROSSTRAB's work in linking sectors and emphasizing intersectoral collaboration was exemplified in our 2007 National Student-Worker Occupational Health Forum**

Linking Sectors: 2007 Forum



- The first of its kind in Nicaragua, the forum was attended by **105 workers, employers, and unionists** from a variety of economic sectors, as well as students and government representatives.

Linking Sectors: 2007 Forum

- Medical students and researchers shared their research and experiences, and exchanged input on each others' work.
- In addition, a representative from the Ministry of Labor presented on the future of occupational health policy in the nation.

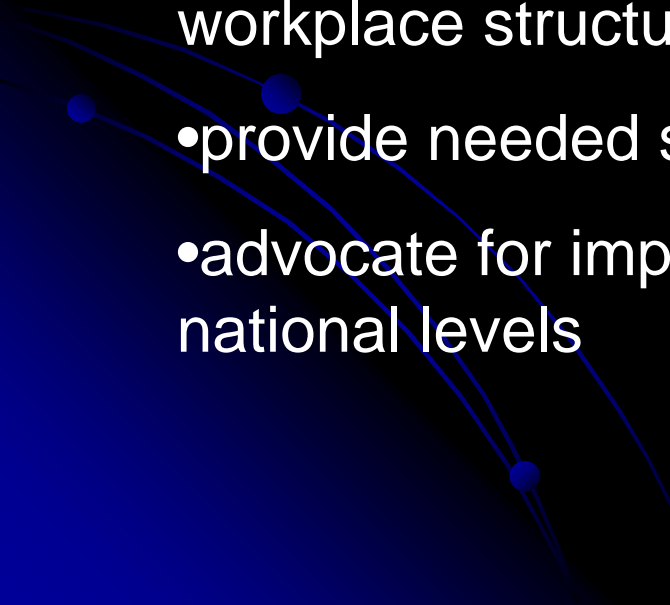


Linking Sectors: 2007 Forum

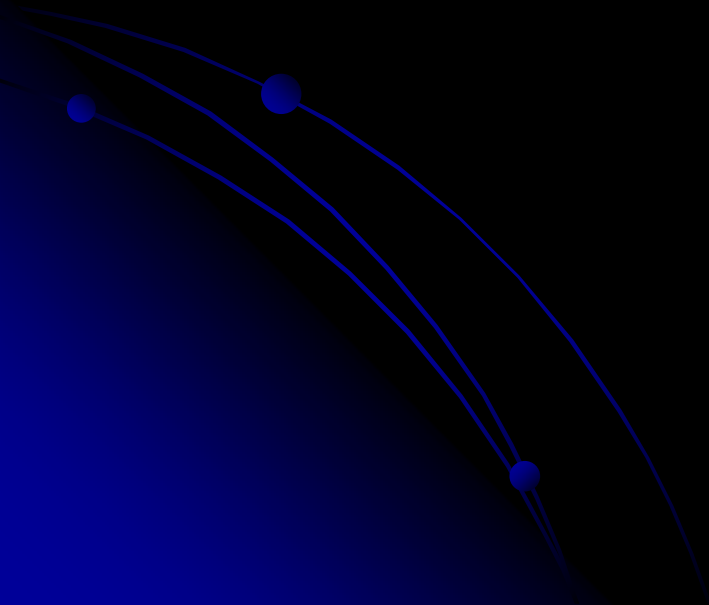
- The forum generated much excitement among both workers and students.
- As a result of the forum, workers from two textile *maquilas* requested that PROSSTRAB facilitate five research projects in their workplaces.
- Government representatives reported that attending the forum deepened their commitment to occupational health

Benefits of Intersectoral Collaboration

Collaboration between workers and health professionals has allowed PROSSTRAB to

- develop effective training
 - reach a maximum number of workers through a train-the-trainer model that incorporates existing union and workplace structures
 - provide needed services to workers
 - advocate for improved policies on the workplace and national levels
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- The PROSSTRAB model could be successfully reproduced in other developing and developed nations.



PROSSTRAB acknowledge CFH for their kind support to the development of occupational health in Nicaragua.

