



## **A Portrait of Economic Realities in Nosara and Sámara: Providing Tools for Sustainable Development**

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## Map of Nicoya Peninsula



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## Objectives and Acknowledgments

The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) undertook this study of Nosara and Sámara Districts and, more broadly, of the Canton of Nicoya in order to provide the Nosara Civic Association (NCA) that represents the coastal zone and Development Association of Nosara (ADIN) that represents the district of Nosara with essential data and technical assistance needed to move forward plans for both governmental reform and sustainability. The NCA's goal, in partnership with ADIN, is to create tools and structures that help to reduce poverty and inequities, provide high quality local livelihoods, facilitate civic engagement, protect and enhance the District's environment and natural capital, and strengthen responsible tourism as the Districts' most important and dynamic economic sector

One of the options under discussion—"home rule" or creating a 12<sup>th</sup> canton in Guanacaste Province—is beyond the expertise and mission of the Center for Responsible Travel, while the alternative of the creation of a "Municipal District Council" is discussed. But, in general, we undertook this research project to provide NCA with both a factual portrait of the social, environmental, and economic conditions in the Nosara and Sámara Districts and the Canton of Nicoya and outline several cutting edge options designed to strengthen sustainable tourism at a destination level.

Over the course of three months, CREST consultant Janelle Wilkins carried out the field research in government offices in San Jose, Nicoya, and Nosara, conducted research via the Internet, interviewed key officials, wrote the bulk of this report, and provided completed versions in both Spanish and English. Specifically the research about the economic and social conditions of the country and the Canton were gathered from Census Data, U.N. and World Bank Reports, the *State of the Nation Report* and many current news articles. Information at the District level required extensive comparative research across many sources as much of the information was not readily available. The Planning Office of the Municipality of Nicoya had compiled and readily shared a great deal of information. Budgetary and spending data came from the Office of the Controller of Nicoya and the Engineering Office with the cooperation of the Mayor of the Municipality of Nicoya.

Another CREST consultant, Amos Bien, provided information on a range of new certification programs for sustainable destinations. CREST Co-Director Martha Honey directed the project, wrote the introductory and final sections (on tourism) as well as the section on destination wide travelers' philanthropy, and edited the final report.

We are grateful to NCA President Alvin Rosenbaum for proposing that CREST undertake this study, for presenting the proposal, and for working closely with the CREST team to collect information and ensure the final report fulfills the project's stated objectives. We also wish to thank The Johnson Short Foundation, Harmony Fund for providing a grant to underwrite the cost of this project.

Finally, we would like to extend special thanks to the following people who assisted Jannelle Wilkins with the research:

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Ms. Bobbi Johnson – Member of the Board of Directors (NCA)  
Mr. Brandon Richardson – Owner Wanderlust Realty  
NCA Board of Directors  
Harmony Hotel

## Executive Summary and Key Findings

Costa Rica has long been internationally recognized and admired as a unique country that abolished its army back in 1948 and has built instead a broad-based social welfare state based on a strong constitutional democracy. Over the last two decades, Costa Rica has also earned a reputation as a global leader in high value ecotourism, centered around the country's national parks and other natural attractions. In 2007, the Costa Rican government announced plans to become the world's first carbon-neutral country by 2021. Costa Rica also became the only country to meet all five criteria established to measure environmental sustainability. And the New Economics Foundation (NEF) has ranked Costa Rica first in both its Happy Planet Index, and as the "greenest" country in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this mantle as the world's most peaceful, green, and happy country often masks Costa Rica's significant economic inequalities that cross geographical region, economic class, and gender. Today some 22% to 25% of Costa Ricans live in poverty. In the districts of Nosara and Sámara, it is estimated that 25% or more of Costa Rican families live in poverty – despite the common perception that foreign residents residing in these communities have brought wealth and a high standard of living to these areas. In fact, recent findings reveal that Guanacaste Province, the breadbasket of Costa Rica's sun-and-sand resort tourism, has the highest level of unemployment in the country, thus raising further doubts that large, all-inclusive branded resorts are generating sustainable livelihoods. Inequality is, however, a national as well as a regional challenge: the gap between rich and poor in Costa Rica is the highest it has been in more than two decades. And the United Nations Development Program, (UNDP) has ranked Costa Rica as 100th out of 126 countries worldwide on its Income Inequality Index, giving it an unenviable position among the world's most unequal countries.

This study, through its compilation of economic data related to poverty, education, and availability of public services helps to deepen an understanding of the cross currents at work particularly on the Guanacaste landscape. Guanacaste Province, one of six in Costa Rica, has been known for cattle ranches and high quality beef and agriculture, especially rice, melons and corn. Over the last 20 years, the province's coastal zone has been converted to an economy of international tourism. Today much of the Guanacaste coast located within two hours of the international airport at Liberia has been developed by high volume mass tourism centered on some 100 four and five-star all-inclusive branded resorts designed to keep guests, activities, and spending within their gates. In contrast, the Nosara and Sámara coastal communities, located just on the edge of what has been dubbed Costa Rica's tourism "Gold Coast", have managed to chart a different course, based on smaller scale, experiential tourism. This is high value – rather than high volume – tourism, which strives to hire and purchase locally, create authentic links to the local destination and surrounding natural and cultural attractions, and ensure that

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia, International Rankings of Costa Rica, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_rankings\\_of\\_Costa\\_Rica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_rankings_of_Costa_Rica).



tourism dollars stay in and benefit the host community. A challenge for the NCA is how to chart a course that preserves and strengthens this type of sustainable tourism while making informed policy adjustments that address the real problems of persistent and in some cases growing poverty, lack of education, unemployment, income gap, and revenue and expenditure disparities.

A first step is understanding the cross currents revealed in the economic statistics, for both the country as a whole and the Canton of Nicoya, as well as for the specific Districts of Nosara and Sámara. To that end, the study's **Key Findings** can be summarized as follows:

### Poverty

1. In 2011, 22% of the population of Costa Rica was living below the poverty line based on the ability to purchase basic food and services (known as the 'Canasta Básica' or Basic Food Poverty Line and Services Cart). 6.3% of households were living in "extreme poverty" nationwide as they were considered unable to meet even basic food needs.
2. "Extreme poverty" based on the ability to cover basic food needs fell from 9% in 2001 to just over 5% in 2006 in the Canton of Nicoya, a marked improvement over surrounding cantons. The Canton of Santa Cruz had the region's highest concentration of poor, with 11.5% of people living in Extreme Poverty.
3. Poverty in Costa Rica is also measured in terms of Unmet Basic Needs (UBN) or the inability to meet certain basic needs in one or more of four categories: adequate shelter, healthy lifestyle, access to knowledge, and access to other essential goods and services.
4. UBN poverty in Costa Rica has been reduced, from 36% in 2000 to 24.6% in 2011.
5. In 2001, the Canton of Nicoya fared far worse than the nation as a whole, with at least 56% of all households having at least one Basic Need Unmet. In three of Nicoya's Districts -- Nosara, Sámara and Belén de Nosarita -- 62%, 66%, and 75% of households respectively were lacking in one or more of the four Basic Needs.
6. In 2011, Nosara and Sámara registered between 34% to 48% of households lacking in at least one basic need and Belén de Nosarita registered between 49% to 63% on this same scale, according to the Estado de la Nación (State of the Nation).. These numbers represent an improvement over 2001 but are still well above the national average of UBN of 24.6% of households.
7. In the District of Nicoya, poverty is greatest in rural areas away from the coast.
8. Therefore, while extreme poverty has been reduced since 2001, in the Canton of Nicoya, including Nosara, the levels of poverty – measured both by purchase of basic goods and services and by the UBN -- remain higher than the national average.

### Income

9. Average national monthly household income is about ₡804,366 or \$1,600, which classifies Costa Rica as an "upper middle income" country, according to the World Bank.
10. However, Costa Rica also ranks very poorly in the UNDP's Income Inequality Index, placing 100th out of 126 countries in 2007-2008.

11. The gap between the rich and the poor has continued to rise. By 2010, incomes for the richest 10% of Costa Rican households were 24 times greater than the poorest 10% -- marking the highest level of inequality in the last 20 years.
12. Disparity is also very evident in Nicoya. In the coastal zone, areas of extreme poverty exist alongside abundant riches, characterized by luxury ocean view homes and resort hotels.

## Employment

13. In 2012, unemployment in Costa Rica hovered around 7.8%, down slightly from 8.4% in 2009, but much higher than 2000 when unemployment was just 5%.
14. In the Canton of Nicoya, the largest percentage of people in the workforce – almost 69% -- are employed in the service industry that includes government, banking, education and tourism. Sámara had a low level of unemployment in the Canton, with just 3.5% while Nosara’s unemployment was 5.7%, according to the 2010 Draft Zoning Plan (Plan Regulador), both well below the national average. In both Districts, 44% of those employed were working in the Tourism and Services Sector.
15. Sámara has a total of 40 registered hotels, while Nosara has 25 Nosara actually shows more hotel employees -- 245 people compared to 201 in Sámara.
16. Despite this, the Draft Zoning Plan concludes, “Over-all employment opportunities for the Cantón are insufficient and job creation continues to be a serious problem.”
17. Although there were great expectations that tourism might become a significant source of employment particularly in areas of high poverty, this may not be holding true. Two indications are:
  - a. Guanacaste, Costa Rica’s prime tourism destination is also the province with the highest rate of unemployment. More than 40,000 adults in Guanacaste are currently out of work, according to November 2013 press reports.
  - b. In 2011, 12.5% of workers in the District of Nicoya were without National Health Insurance compared with 23% of workers in the District of Nosara where tourism is the leading employer.

## Education

18. Poverty and education correlate: households with fewer years of schooling tend to have lower incomes and their children are less likely to attend or graduate high school.<sup>2</sup>
19. In Nicoya District, over 43% (close to the national average) of students complete high school.
20. However, in both Nosara and Sámara Districts, 75% of the overall work force doesn’t have a high school education, yet there are more tourism and other service jobs available, which require education, than in many other near-by districts.

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<sup>2</sup> Zach Dyer, “Poverty and poor teaching weigh down Costa Rica's education system”, *Tico Times*, September, 2013.

## Index of Human Poverty

21. Costa Rica's Index of Human Poverty integrates measures of economic poverty, the probability of not living past age 60, having less than a 3rd grade education, and suffering from long term unemployment.
22. While the Canton of Nicoya has risen from 73rd in 2000 to 66th out of the country's 81 Cantons, it is still in the lowest 20%.

## Expenditures: Canton of Nicoya

23. The Canton's annual budget expenditures are broken down into three Program areas: General Administration, Services, and Investments.
24. Between 2009 and 2012, Nicoya District had 149 projects proposed, San Antonio had 146 projects proposed, and Belen de Nosarita had 112, while Nosara had 67 and Sámara had 50.
25. The large number of projects for Belen de Nosarita, has a much smaller population may be as a response to its greater needs given its level of poverty.
26. In Nosara, most of the 67 budgeted projects were for road maintenance or improvements to drainage systems between 2009 and 2012. Only about 15 were for other projects such as schools and community and health centers, and of these, only five were executed. Approximately 70 million colones was spent on roads and drainage projects and about 10.5 million on other types of projects.
27. Despite these public works projects, the Districts of Nosara and Sámara, still have between 34% to 48% (See Map 3) of all households that were unable to meet at least one of the Basic Needs of adequate shelter, healthy lifestyle, access to knowledge, and/or access to other essential goods and services. Belen de Nosarita has even more households facing these conditions, 49% to 63%. One contributing factor may be that most appropriated funds were not spent: in 2012, for instance, Nosara spent about 30% of the funds allocated and executed only about 50% of the projects budgeted. Other years show similar patterns.
28. Budget expenditures for Services (Program Area 2) were not broken out by District and therefore could not be analyzed. Other than road cleaning, safety and maintenance, services include important functions such as garbage collection and treatment; parks and beautification; markets, plazas and fairs; education, culture and sports; bus terminals; improvements in coastal areas; environmental protection; management services and emergency care.

## Revenue

29. District governments base their annual budgets mainly on two types of revenue streams: payments from the Central Government and "Tributes," which include taxes and fees collected from its constituents that are used by the Canton for public works.
30. Property taxes in Costa Rica are very low: only 0.25% of the value of the property as registered with the municipal government. (In contrast, in the U.S., property taxes range from a low in California of 1% of the assessed value to the nation's highest in New York, of up to 2.8%.) Because there is no system in Costa Rica for assessing property values, many properties are self-assessed, are vastly undervalued, and are either exempted from taxes or pay very little.

31. Although it is not known how many properties within each district qualify for exemption, these exemptions clearly impact the amount of property taxes collected. Consequently, revenues collected from property taxes are generally much lower than projected in local government budgets.
32. Property taxes paid per person shows vast discrepancies. Each person in Nosara and Sámara pays almost five to six times more in property taxes than individuals living in the more densely populated areas of Nicoya and between seven to 9.5 times more than people in the other four districts.
33. Properties in Sámara and Nosara also pay more in taxes: between two to three times more than properties in the city and surrounding areas of Nicoya and five to six times more than properties in the more rural areas such as Mansión or Quebrada Honda. This can be attributed to the higher values placed on these properties. Homes in Playas de Nosara, for instance, currently sell from \$100,000 to over \$2,000,000.
34. In comparing taxes collected and public expenditures from 2009 – 2012, it is apparent that revenues generated from property taxes along the coastal Districts of Nosara and Sámara are much greater proportionately than in any other district, while funds expended on public works, including road improvements and/or maintenance are proportionately very small.

In integrating and interpreting these economic findings, three broad conclusions appear evident, and these, in turn, can help to shape NCA's strategic vision as well as to define priority areas for social and environmental projects together with areas where additional research may be required. The three overarching conclusions are:

- **Nosara lacks sufficient government services.** Nosara is presently paying far more in property taxes to the Canton than it is receiving back from the government in Nicoya in terms of public services. (The study does not assess the funding Nosara is receiving from the national government.) The majority of the Canton funded projects are for infrastructure, most importantly for road works. Many basic social services such as garbage collection, recycling, and water are financed by the district, including by ADIN and NCA, sometimes as public-private partnerships. However, while there is a clear disparity between the proportionately large amount Nosara and Sámara residents pay in taxes and fees and small amount of public spending that flows back to the area in the form of local services, it is not certain that more public services alone will reduce poverty and increase employment. The facts above also reveal that Belen de Nosarita, one of the poorest Districts in the Canton, has received disproportionately more public projects and yet poverty persists. That District still registers having between 49% to 63% of households with one or more basic needs unmet.
- **Low education levels and unemployment are tied together and fuel the stubbornly high levels of poverty in both Nosara and Sámara.** As these coastal communities have moved from agriculture into international tourism (including residential tourism), much of the local population has remained ill equipped for these new construction and service jobs in hotels and restaurants. Many of the best paying and most skilled tourism-related jobs are going to

foreigners or Costa Ricans from outside these communities. There is an urgent need for vocational skills and English language training, particularly of young people. In addition, there is a need for employment that targets women. As examples from elsewhere in Costa Rica have proved, including from Monteverde and Punta Islita (as discussed below), women's personal, household, and community standing improves through good employment. Not only can women be prepared for work in the tourism sector, but there are also possibilities of creating tourism related auxiliary businesses or cooperatives such as handicrafts, small restaurants and catering services, and organic farms that build on traditional women's knowledge and skills and are tied into the tourism market.

- **Growth and 'development', while inevitable, must be carefully managed.** Despite the economic disparities, Nosara and Sámara enjoy well deserved reputations for both small-scale sustainable tourism and as attractive livable communities built on strong social and environmental values. But, as experience elsewhere in Guanacaste has shown, fast paced and often ill-planned and inappropriate tourism development can happen very quickly. Around Liberia, the trigger, beginning in 2002 was the start of international air service and the opening of the Four Seasons Hotel. For Nosara and Sámara, a trigger for rapid unplanned development could be the completion of a paved road from the Liberia airport. The road is scheduled to be paved, and so that challenge is how to put in place beforehand necessary instruments and regulations to ensure that growth is well managed and that the tourism sector (including residential tourism) continues to focus on attracting high value rather than high volume visitors and property owners.

This economic snapshot and summary conclusions does not provide full answers to why poverty has persisted and the income gap widened despite the country's economic growth, political stability, and international popularity, but they do point to some areas where reforms are needed and other areas where further analysis is warranted. The final sections of this report include CREST's suggestions, based on its work elsewhere in Costa Rica as well as in other countries, for steps that Nosara and Sámara can take to strengthen their sustainable tourism sector. These two proposals – for expanded certification including destination-wide sustainable certification under a new international program and for destination-wide travelers' philanthropy and community fund similar to one recently created in Monteverde, are likely to increase international recognition of Nosara and Sámara as destinations offering high quality, socially and environmentally responsible tourism and community development. Also included is a chapter describing District Advisory Councils as a tool for greater local political and fiduciary control, with Monteverde again serving as a case study. The final chapter lays out NCA's vision and steps forward in terms of governmental reforms required to improve local livelihoods, build civic engagement, and strengthen environmental stewardship.

## I. Description of Canton & Districts

Costa Rica is made up of six Regions and seven Provinces. The Regions generally were established on the basis of geographic and/or relevant cultural and historical factors. Provinces are more geographically based. Within each Province are a number of Cantones, 81 in all, and in each Canton, several districts. This report concentrates on the Region of Chorotega, the Province of Guanacaste, and the Canton of Nicoya. The Canton of Nicoya encompasses the Districts of Nicoya, Mansión, San Antoinio, Quebrada Honda Sámara, Nosara and Belen de Nosarita. (Note that the name Nicoya refers at times to a Canton and at other times to the much smaller District by the same name. In all cases we have tried to clarify which is being sited.) Nicoya is also the name of the capital city of the Canton referred to as the Municipality.

**Map 1: Regions of Costa Rica**



**Map 2: Provinces of Costa Rica**



The Canton of Nicoya is the second largest within the Province of Guanacaste. Founded in 1848, it was one of the first 13 Cantones established in Costa Rica. The name Nicoya comes originally from the indigenous language, Náhuatl, which means land with water on both sides referring to the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Gulf of Nicoya on the other.

Guanacaste has always been known for its extensive cattle ranches and quality beef production, a portion of which is exported. The District of Nicoya that covers 1,334 square kilometers follows suit with approximately 42% of its territory used for pasture land. Forest covers 37% of other areas, mostly in the southeast and northeast portions of the District. This 37% does not include protected areas or forestry reserves such as the National Park of Barra Honda, the Indigenous Reserve of Matambú, the National Wildlife Refuge of Ostional or the Protected Area of Cerro la Cruz, add greatly to the

biodiversity of the area. The coastal regions, with beautiful beaches along the Pacific and fragile mangroves both on the Pacific and Gulf sides add an important element to both the landscapes and land uses of the Canton. The major tourist attractions center around the coastal areas of Sámara and Nosara with a large sea turtle conservation area that spans the beach from Nosara to Ostional.

Rice, melons and corn are the main crops grown in the Canton, with rice and melons rotating between the wet and dry seasons but grown in the same fields. The commercial zones are concentrated around the population centers within the Districts of Nicoya, Mansión, Nosara and Sámara. The Canton has a total population of 50,825, almost half of , live in the District of Nicoya. San Antonio has the largest land area with 338 sq. kilometers, but the District of Nicoya is close behind with 312 sq. kilometers. (See table 1 for population and land areas of all Districts.)

**Table 1: Populations and Land Areas of Districts of Nicoya**

<b>CANTÓN</b>	<b>POB. TOTAL (2011)</b>	<b>LAND AREA Sq. Km.</b>
Nicoya	50,826	1,333.70
<b>DISTRICTS</b>		
Nicoya	24,752	331.08
Mansión	5,974	211.67
San Antonio	6,521	338.17
Quebrada Honda	2,520	106.93
Sámara	3,510	109.51
Nosara	4,920	134.92
Belén de Nosarita	2,629	121.40

**II. Poverty Indicators**

**Methods of Measuring Poverty** - Costa Rica uses two different measures for tracking poverty:

**UBN:** Throughout Latin America an indicator referred to as Unsatisfactory Basic Needs (UBN) has traditionally been used to estimate levels of poverty. The UBN strives to identify households and/or individuals who are unable to meet at least one of the needs, which are considered indispensable for basic human well-being. The UBN is comprised of four elements, , are ranked equally: 1) access to shelter, 2) access to a healthy life, 3) access to knowledge and learning, and 4) access to other goods and services, sometimes referred to as consumption capacity. The four categories are measured and reported separately, but are aggregated when referred to on the District level. The data for each of the four categories per district were not readily available from the 2010 Census, but is broken down by District from data from the 2000 Census. (See Table 2 and Graph 1). The data reflected in terms of UBN are very different from those represented by estimates of Poverty Lines.

**Poverty Line:** In Costa Rica, the term “Poverty Line” is used when income is less than the amount necessary to be able to purchase basic goods and services as determined by the Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Commerce. The Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN) defines the Poverty Line as:

Households that have monthly incomes per person, are less than the cost of the ‘Canasta Básica’ or Basic Food Poverty Line and Services Cart, plus an additional amount to cover basic necessities as established by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) are classified as ‘Poor’ while those households that do not have incomes sufficient to cover the cost of basic food needs as established by the, ‘Canasta Básica Alimentaria’, or Basic Food Cart, are considered in the category of ‘Extreme Poverty’. This method has been used since 1987.<sup>3</sup>

Citizens are classified into one of three categories: extreme poverty, poverty or no poverty.

The Census of 2000 used the method of Unsatisfactory Basic Needs to construct a map of the Districts with the most critical needs. The results showed that 36% of families and 40% of people countrywide lived with at least one basic need unmet at that time. It also showed that there was great variation from District to District and Region to Region.

In 2011 similar maps were also created using this same method, but for the purposes of other statistical analysis, they also looked at the Poverty Line (PL) indicators. The UBN showed a marked percentage improvement across the country with 24.6% of households having one or more basic need unmet. The greatest gains had been in the area of access to knowledge.

Poverty Line indicators, however, continued to show poverty in terms of income to households and are basically unchanging since 1994. The results indicated that 21.67% of households in Costa Rica fell within the poverty category. Once again the geographical variation was so pronounced that in some areas near San Jose as few as 6.35% of households lived in poverty while in La Cruz in Guanacaste as many as 57.31% of households lived below the poverty line.

Utilizing two definitions of poverty can make comparison across reports confusing. To add to this confusion, after 2010 statistics for households were collected by Enaho (The National Survey of Households) and their data collection used a different set of criteria and questions. Therefore comparisons with previous poverty figures can be misleading or inaccurate.

It is also unclear why levels of poverty measured as a product of income (PL) are often reported by Region while measures for Unsatisfied Basic Needs are more frequently correlated by Province.

In this report, both the Region of Chorotega and the Province of Guanacaste are cited because much of the information available is reported for either one or the other. (See Map 1 & 2) However, it should be noted that, the Province of Guanacaste and the Region of Chorotega generally over-lap geographically with the exception that a small part of the northern region of Chorotega includes a portion of the

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<sup>3</sup> Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Político Económico (MIDEPLAN), Costa Rica Canasta Básica Alimentaria, 2012.



northwestern province of Alajuela. (See Maps 1 & 2) Therefore looking at figures for both the Region and the Province are useful for the purposes of this report.

**Poverty & Extreme Poverty:** The census of 2011 indicates that 21.67% of the population of Costa Rica lives below the poverty line with extreme poverty affecting 6.3% of households nationwide. While the incidence of extreme poverty throughout Costa Rica has decreased in recent years, over-all levels of poverty as measured in terms of income have remained stagnant. The, *Estado de la Nación*, 2013, reports,

“[I]n the last 18 years Costa Rica has not been able to achieve sustained reduction of poverty when measured as a product of income. Since 1994, this phenomenon remains stuck at 20%, plus or minus 1.5 percentage points, except for 2007 and 2008, due to a set of economic and social policy factors that were not present later.”<sup>4</sup>

This reality is also true for the Canton of Nicoya. The percentage of people living in poverty for the Region of Chorotega is approximately the same as for the country as a whole, however, the index for extreme poverty is almost twice the national average at 11.5% with the highest concentration in the Canton of Santa Cruz, Guanacaste<sup>5</sup>. Extreme poverty in the Canton of Nicoya reached a high of almost 9% in 2001 but has been decreasing since that time. By 2006 only 5.4% of the population in this Canton fell into the category of extreme poverty, suggesting a marked improvement over the near-by Canton of Santa Cruz.<sup>6</sup>

**Basic Needs:** The 2000 and the 2011 Census also looked at poverty based on Unsatisfactory Basic Needs. In 2000, 36% of all households in Costa Rica were considered unable to meet at least one of the basic needs of adequate shelter, healthy lifestyle, access to knowledge, and/or access to other essential goods and services. This number cannot be compared to the above mentioned poverty level of 21.67% as that indicator takes into account only people’s level of income. UBN looks in greater detail at the causes of poverty with ability to purchase goods and services accounting for only one of the measurements.

In 2000, while 36% of households countrywide were unable to meet at least one basic need, in the Canton of Nicoya at least 56% of all households fell into this “poverty” category. But even more alarming is that in the Districts of Nosara and Sámara, 62% and 66% of households respectively were lacking in one or more of these basic needs. Belen de Nosarita ranked among the lowest districts in the country with 75% of all households unable to meet at least one of their basic needs. When measured by overall population, rather than households, the situation was even worse. In Nosara and Belen de Nosarita, 72% and 78% respectively of the populations in these districts lack either decent shelter, access to knowledge, access to basic services or access to healthy living conditions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Estado de la Nación, 2012, pg. 102

<sup>5</sup> INEC Census data, 2011

<sup>6</sup> Plan Regulador del Canton de Nicoya

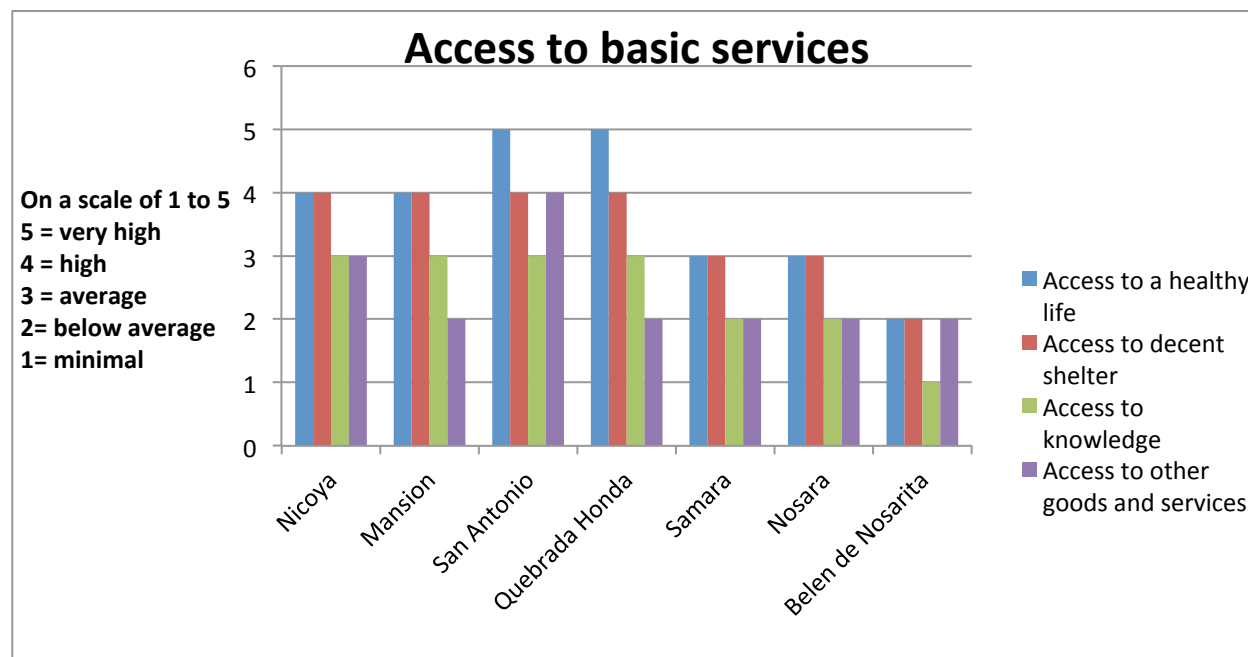
<sup>7</sup> INEC Census data 2000

**Table 2. Households and Population unable to meet basic needs, 2000**

District	Households							% of households with at least 1 deficiency	% of total population with at least one critical need unmet
	Total	Without Deficiencies	With Critical Needs Unmet						
			Total	With one	With two	With three	With four		
NICOYA	5,470	3,090	2,380	1,334	705	294	47	44%	46%
MANSIÓN	1,206	574	632	387	183	56	6	52%	55%
SAN ANTONIO	1,771	949	822	581	188	46	7	46%	48%
QUEBRADA HONDA	598	334	264	186	64	14	0	44%	46%
SÁMARA	626	236	390	202	137	40	11	62%	67%
NOSARA	683	233	450	226	128	79	17	66%	72%
BELÉN DE NOSARITA	482	121	361	138	136	77	10	75%	78%

In 2000, the Districts of Nicoya, Mansion, San Antonio and Quebrada Honda often ranked in the medium range on a scale of 1 to 5 for households, lacked at least one basic need. Nosara, Sámara and Belen de Nosarita invariably showed lower levels of access to all indicators. Belen de Nosarita ranked at the most critical level on the indices of *Access to Knowledge*.<sup>8</sup>

**Graph 1: Over-all Index of Critical Needs by District, 2000**

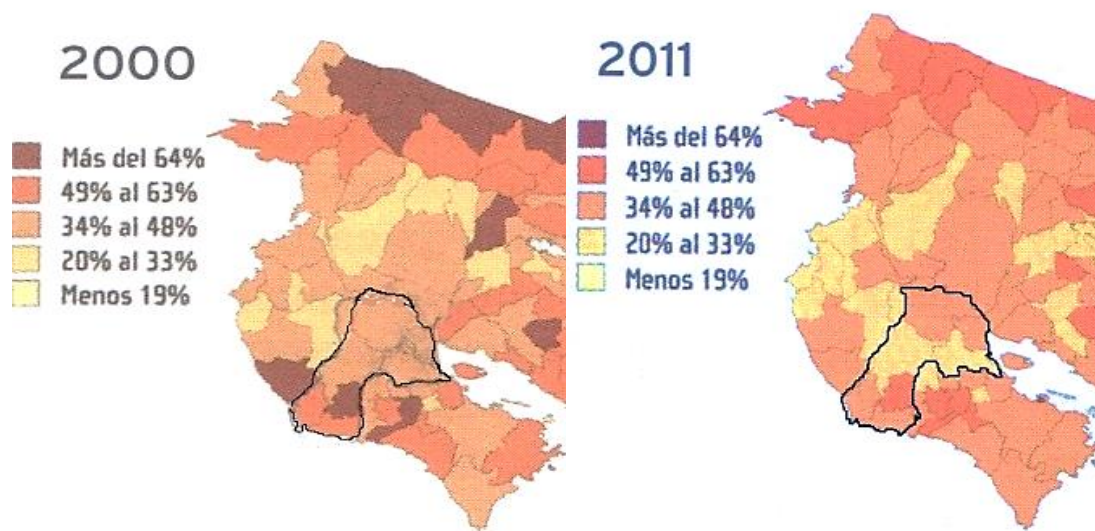


<sup>8</sup> Created from data in the 2000 Census, INEC 2000

On the **Over-all Index of Critical Needs** (Graph 1), from the 2000 Census, Nosara and Sámara ranked low, while Belen de Nosarita ranked at the very bottom in the Canton.<sup>9</sup>

By the 2011 census, conditions had improved across the country with more than 340,000 people or 11.5% of the population no longer living in conditions in , at least one of the basic needs was going unmet.<sup>10</sup> At the District level in the Canton of Nicoya there had also been improvement. Nosara and Sámara, registered 34% to 48% of all households lacking in at least one basic need up from 49% to 63% in the previous Census. Belén de Nosarita, which had registered in the lowest category in the 2000 Census with more that 64% of households having at least one basic need unmet, also showed improvement, but still lagged behind all other districts in the Canton with 49% to 63% of households facing some critical needs. The numbers for all three districts are still, unfortunately, high when considering basic needs.

**Map 3: Map of Critical Needs in Guanacaste by District 2000 & 2011<sup>11</sup>**



CONARE, the Council of University Chancellors, (Consejo Nacional de Rectores) published another map in 2011, which shows in greater detail the areas of households with most critical needs. As this map is not divided by districts, it demonstrates that areas of greatest needs reach across geopolitical lines. Generally they are inland, away from the coastal areas, and seem to cover a large area, not only of Nosara and Belen de Nosarita, but large sections of the District of Nicoya. The area around the Municipality of Nicoya shows fewer basic needs going unmet and since this accounts for the largest percentage of the population in that district, it most likely skews the results district wide.

<sup>9</sup> Created from maps from INEC, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Estado de la Nación, 2012. Pg. 103

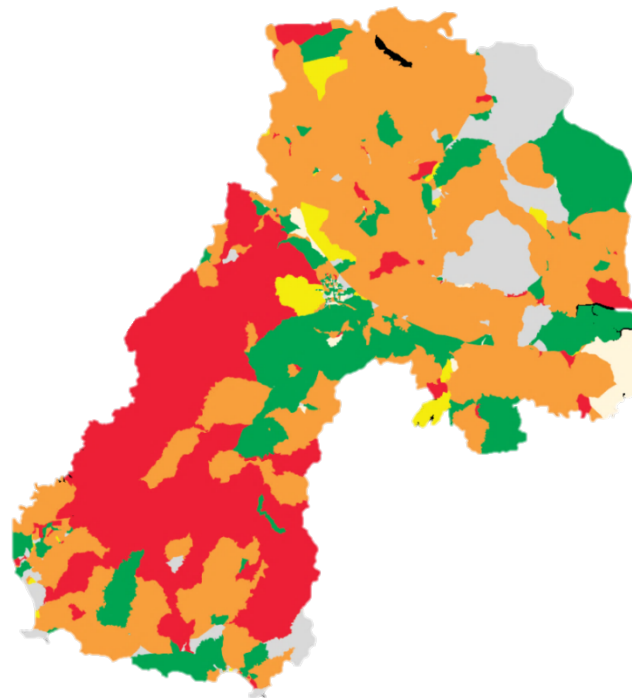
<sup>11</sup> Estado de la Nación, 2012. Pg. 104

This map emphasizes the reality that rural areas, in general, suffer from greater poverty by whatever measure, than urban areas and that access to healthy living, education, and adequate shelter often depends on isolation and distance from more populated areas, which either have more commerce or a tourism based economy, as in the case of Nosara and Sámara.

**Map 4: Map showing percentage of households with basic needs unmet throughout the Nicoya Canton by household not by District, 2011.<sup>12</sup>**

**Porcentaje de hogares con al menos una carencia**

- Sin viviendas
- Sin NBI
- De 0,1% a menos de 10%
- De 10% a menos 25%
- De 25% a menos de 50%
- De 50% y más



**Household Incomes and Disparity:** The National Statistics and Census Institute (INEC), as part of the 2010 National Survey of Homes, reported that the average national monthly household income for that year was ₡804,366 or \$1,600. The average salary per person in Costa Rica was calculated at ₡268,592, approximately \$540 per month.<sup>13</sup> According to the World Bank, this level of income means that Costa Rica is therefore classified as an “upper middle income” country.<sup>14</sup>

According to a Draft Copy of the Zoning Plan for the Canton of Nicoya the household incomes in this area rated slightly above average in 2006, up from an average rating in 2000. However, the Canton of Nicoya showed slow progress in the equal distribution of material welfare since the Census of 2000.

Despite ranking very high in a number of important international rankings, Costa Rica falls in nearly the bottom fifth—100<sup>th</sup> out of 126 countries— in the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP)

<sup>12</sup> Indicadores Cantonales, CONARE, 2011

<sup>13</sup> Adam Williams, “Costa Rican unemployment down, poverty up”, *Tico Times*, November 30, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> ChartsBin, Country Income Groups (World Bank Classification), <http://chartsbin.com/view/2438>.

Income Inequality Index.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, disparity between the rich and the poor has been on a steady rise throughout the country. From 2000 to 2010 not only did the total number of impoverished people in Costa Rica grow but at the same time the disparity between the rich and the poor also increased. According to the 2010 *State of the Nation* report, Costa Rica reached a point of greatest inequality in the last 20 years. Incomes for the richest 10% of households are 24 times that of the poorest 10%.<sup>16</sup> In 2009 alone, Costa Rica's richest homes saw an 11.6 % growth in household income while that of the poorest households experienced a 6.9 % drop.<sup>17</sup>

Disparity is also very evident in Nicoya. According to the Draft Zoning Report for the Canton of Nicoya, "The coastal zone, with its series of hotel complexes and tourist related activities, has had a strong impact on the local economy. In this Canton coexist areas of extreme poverty alongside abundant riches; on one side, there is an area of luxury ocean view households while on the other side entire populations are situated in flood zones, with basic infrastructures that are inadequate."<sup>18</sup>

**The Economy and Employment:** The Costa Rican economy is divided into four sectors: the first is comprised of income generated from agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining. The second is the industrial, manufacturing and energy generation sector. The third is service industries including tourism, transportation, communication, education, financing, and administration (government). Intellectual property that comprises investigation, research and development, and innovation and information comprise the fourth sector.

The largest number of people in the workforce in the Canton of Nicoya were employed in the service industry, (the third sector); 68.6% of the total population. The first and second sectors, the first being those employed in agriculture, mining, fishing or forestry and the second those involved in manufacturing, ranked 16.9% and 14.5% respectively. Whereas people employed in the Nicoya District are more likely to be involved with commerce, government and education and thereby shown as part of the third sector, the coastal communities of Nosara and Sámara have slightly higher employment levels in the third sector mostly based on their higher involvement in the tourist sector. In Belen de Nosarita the majority of the population is still highly involved in agriculture, the first sector.

In 2012 unemployment levels in Costa Rica hovered around 7.8%, down slightly from 8.4% in 2009 (INEC) when levels were affected by the world financial crisis, but much higher than 2000 when the unemployment rate was reported at just 5%. And while the number of university-educated women outnumbers that of men, female unemployment is reported at 10%, while that of men is just 6%. Even as employment figures rose since 2000, the number of households living in poverty increased.<sup>19</sup> Women heads of households also increased during this time. Disparity between the rich and the poor increases

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<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia, "International Rankings of Costa Rica," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_rankings\\_of\\_Costa\\_Rica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_rankings_of_Costa_Rica)

<sup>16</sup> Estado de la Nación 2012,

<sup>17</sup> Tico Times, "Inequality and poverty are signs of the times in Costa Rica", by Mike McDonald, Nov. 2, 2010

<sup>18</sup> Draft Plan Regulador del Canton de Nicoya, **GOBIERNO DE COSTA RICA**, Ministerio de Hacienda y INYPSA, desarrollado por la Municipalidad de Nicoya, 2010

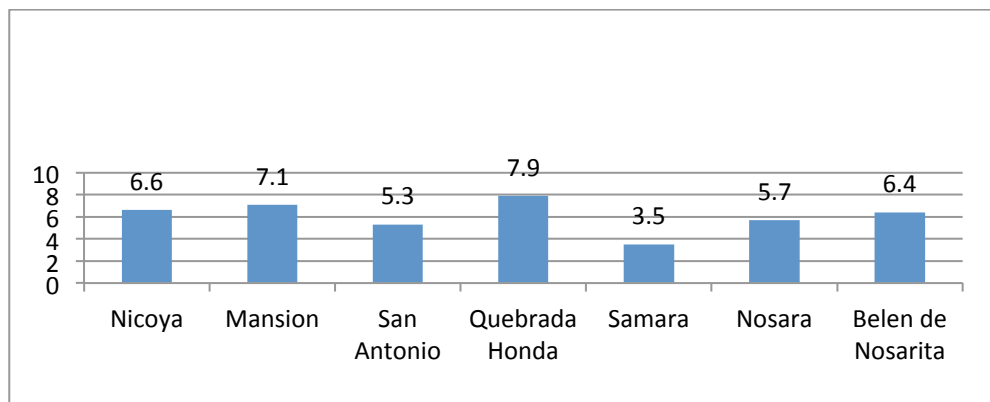
<sup>19</sup> Adam Williams, "Costa Rican unemployment down, poverty up," *Inside Costa Rica*, November 30, 2010 .

in the cost of living, and the rising unemployment figures for woman have all played a role in the inability to impact poverty across the population in general and may account for the paradox that both employment figures and poverty grew during the same period.

For the Canton of Nicoya, according to the 2000 Census, the overall unemployment rate has been around 6.3%, which is below that of the Province of Guanacaste and the National average. The districts of Nicoya, Mansion and Quebrada Honda had the highest rates of unemployment, similar to the national average, while all other districts are lower.

According to the 2010 “Draft Zoning Plan”, Sámara, in particular, had a low level of unemployment – just 3.5%, while Nosara’s unemployment was 5.7%.<sup>20</sup> Although the report for the zoning plan for Nicoya attributes the low level of unemployment in Sámara to the development of tourism, both Nosara and Sámara had equal percentages of the population, 44%, employed in the Tourism and Services Sector (Third Sector). Sámara, however, had a larger percentage of its population active in agriculture (First Sector):45% as opposed to 29% in Nosara. Perhaps the continuing presence of agriculture contributes to this lower unemployment rate in the Sámara District. The Draft Zoning Plan concludes that, “Over-all employment opportunities for the Cantón are insufficient and job creation continues to be a serious problem.”<sup>21</sup> More investigation is required to understand more precisely what the Draft Zoning Plan means by this statement, but it may be that despite the fairly low unemployment figures, the levels of existing poverty may indicate that people are underemployed or not receiving a living wage.

**Graph 2: Percentage of Unemployment by District, 2000**



From Draft of the Zoning Plan for the Canton of Nicoya based on data from the 2000 Census.

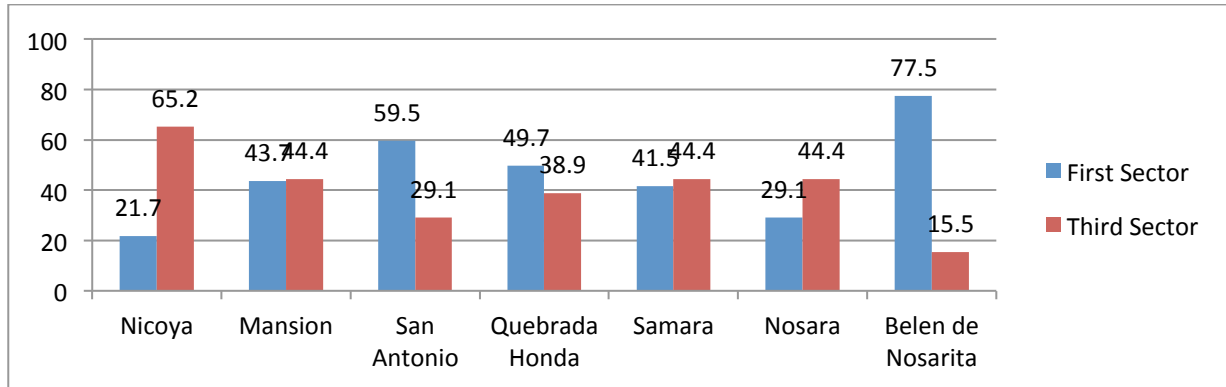
There has been a marked shift in employment between the sectors – away from agriculture and towards tourism -- over the last two decades. In 1996 there were 234 employers in the Canton from the first

<sup>20</sup> Draft Plan Regulador del Canton de Nicoya, **GOBIERNO DE COSTA RICA**, Ministerio de Hacienda y INYPSA, developed for the Municipalidad de Nicoya, 2010, pg.91

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. pg.91

sector, mostly agriculture. By 2006 that number had decreased to just 71. During this same time there was greater development in the third sector, mainly tourism.<sup>22</sup>

**Graph 3: Percentage of people employed by sector, 2000**



\*Based on table from the Draft Zoning Plan for Nicoya, drawn from 2000 Census

According to statistics from the Costa Rican Tourism Institute, (ICT), Sámara has 446 rooms for tourists and Nosara has 259. Considering that the populations of each area are relatively small, approximately 3500 and 5000 respectively, the impact of employment in hotels in each of these areas is significant. During the high tourist season over 200 people are employed just in hotels in Sámara and just over 250 people in Nosara. There is a higher ratio of staff to rooms in Nosara, which may speak to a larger number of high-end enterprises.

These numbers do not account for other people who work in restaurants, tourist shops, surf shops, car rental agencies and more, all of whom are catering to the tourist trade. Therefore the percentage of workers in the tourism sector is clearly larger.

Our research revealed several potentially important areas where more information is needed. For instance, ICT statistics indicated that very few people are laid off during low season.<sup>23</sup> This might warrant further on-site research to verify, since most hotels in Nosara and Sámara are closed during September and October. It is possible that not all temporary help hired in the high season is reported and that health insurance and other benefits may not be covered for some employees.

For example, even though higher numbers of people are involved with tourism along the Coastal zones, fewer are covered by the National Health Insurance. For example, in 2012, in the District of Nicoya, 12.5% of workers were not covered by the National Health Insurance compared to 23% in the District of Nosara.<sup>24</sup> Again, this area warrants further inquiry to understand why fewer employees are covered in Nosara.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pg. 100

<sup>23</sup> Statistic received from the office of ICT en Nicoya

<sup>24</sup> Op cit. Draft Zoning Plan

In addition, very few tourist businesses in either Sámara or Nosara have a “Declaración Turística” or Tourism Declaration. In Sámara only five hotels have this designation and in Nosara there are six.<sup>25</sup> While not required to obtain a business license, hotels and other tourism-related businesses must obtain a Tourist Declaration in order to receive marketing and technical support from the ICT, obtain a liquor license, and apply for certification under the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program. This program awards one to five green leaves based on a rigorous set of social, environmental, and economic criteria. (See below). Tourism Declarations are issued by the ICT under the regulations of an executive decree.<sup>26</sup> Hotels applying for Tourism Declarations must obtain at least one star (lowest level) under the Five Star Rating program that measures quality, service, and price. In practice, it is assumed that all hotels in Costa Rica catering to an international market are certified under the Five Star program and hold a Tourism Declaration. In Sámara only one hotel has a CST rating, while in Nosara there are four hotels, which have been awarded “green leaves,” one at the highest level of five leaves.<sup>27</sup> More research is needed to understand why so few hotels and other tourism businesses in Sámara and Nosara have a Tourism Declaration.

**Table 3: Hotels in Nosara and Sámara with a Tourist Declaration or Certificate of Sustainable Tourism (CST)**

<b>HOTEL</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>Has a Tourist Declaration from ICT</b>	<b>Have CST Approval</b>	<b>Number of leaves Awarded by CST</b>
HOTEL LAGARTA LODGE	NOSARA		YES	4
RANCHO SUIZO LODGE	NOSARA	YES		
HARMONY HOTEL	NOSARA	YES	YES	5
HOTEL KAYASOL	NOSARA	YES		
L'ACQUA VIVA RESORT & SPA	NOSARA	YES	YES	3
GIARDINO TROPICALE	NOSARA	YES	YES	4
ALBERGUE EL RAMAL	NOSARA	YES		
<b>TOTAL NOSARA</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	
HOTEL LAS BRISAS DEL PACIFICO	SÁMARA	YES		
VILLAS PLAYA SÁMARA	SÁMARA	YES		
HOTEL SÁMARA INN	SÁMARA	YES		
HOTEL GIADA	SÁMARA	YES	1	4
THE HIDEAWAY HOTEL	SÁMARA	YES		
<b>TOTAL SÁMARA</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	

<sup>25</sup> Statistics received from the office of ICT, Nicoya

<sup>26</sup> Regulations for Tourism Companies and Activities. Executive Decree No. 25226-MEICTUR, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit. Office of ICT, Nicoya



In Costa Rica there have long been great expectations that tourism—the country’s top foreign exchange earner—might become a significant source of good paying jobs, particularly in areas of high poverty. However, this may not be holding true. The Draft Zoning Plan for Nicoya states that “the Canton has been unable to match the influence of tourism as the main economic activity with existing economic reality.”<sup>28</sup> And just recently (November 4, 2013), the Costa Rica Star On-line Newspaper reported, “For all its tourism, real estate development and high-technology firms, Guanacaste leads Costa Rica as the province with the highest rate of unemployment. More than 40,000 adults in Guanacaste are currently out of work, which is something that the Ministry of Labor is handling as an emergency.”<sup>29</sup> Once again, this is an area where more research is needed to better understand what lies behind this astonishing figure, including who are these unemployed and what do the tourism and construction sectors need in order to be able to employ them.

## Education

Even though, according to the World Bank, Costa Rica’s youth (15 to 24 years) have a literacy rate of 98% and overall literacy rate of almost 95%,<sup>30</sup> education is often insufficient to equip Costa Ricans for jobs, particularly in the growing tourism sector. Poverty, inequality and poor teaching are some of the greatest challenges to educating young Ticos, according to the 2013 *Fourth State of Education Report*. This assessment of public education states that 41.2% of children up to six years old live in homes with parents who have less than six years of schooling. Poverty and years of schooling correlate. According to the report households with fewer years of schooling tend to have lower incomes and their children are less likely to attend or graduate high school.<sup>31</sup>

In 2011, only 46.3 percent of students between 17 and 21 completed secondary education nationwide. The district of Nicoya is close to the national average with 43.3% of students completing high school, but in the rural districts this number is often far less. In Nosara District, for example, only 25.4% of students graduated from high school.<sup>32</sup> Numbers for students attending elementary school are far higher with 86.1% of students throughout Costa Rica completing 6<sup>th</sup> grade, while in Nicoya and Nosara Districts the percentages were 80.2% and 72.2% respectively.<sup>33</sup> Almost 28% of children from Nosara are leaving school with only the most rudimentary education, equivalent to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, yet this in an area where more jobs are available than in many other near-by districts, especially in tourism,. Sámara has one of the highest levels of employment in the country and yet 75% of the workforce in the area doesn’t have a high school education and approximately 3% of the population of the Canton of Nicoya is illiterate.

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<sup>28</sup> Op. cit. Draft Zoning Plan, Nicoya

<sup>29</sup> Costa Rica Star On-line Newspaper, Jaime Lopez, November 4, 2013

<sup>30</sup> World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.ZS> and Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_literacy\\_rate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_literacy_rate).

<sup>31</sup> Zach Dyer, “Poverty and poor teaching weigh down Costa Rica’s education system”, *Tico Times*, September, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> INEC, 2011

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

## In Summary

Many highly correlated factors such as access to basic needs, level of education, health, and employment opportunities contribute to levels of poverty. Costa Rica has established an Index of Human Poverty that integrates measures of economic poverty, the probability of not living past age 60, having less than a 3rd grade education and suffering from long term unemployment. According to this Index, referred to as the IPH, in 2000 the Canton of Nicoya ranked 73 among 81 Cantons countrywide, close to the bottom. By 2005, its standing had risen somewhat to the position of 69, and by 2009 to 66. However in real numbers Nicoya's improved ranking occurred because other districts such as Perez Zeledon, Golfito, Osa and Puntarenas fared worse. In Nicoya, only slightly more than 1000 people rose above the Human Poverty Index from 2005 to 2009.<sup>34</sup>

The districts, which have the highest levels of tourist traffic, such as Sámara, Nosara and San Antonio, have some advantages in terms of higher employment opportunities for residents, but according to the 2000 Census the levels of education are low and over-all poverty (measured in terms of meeting basic needs), are high in the districts of Belen de Nosarita, Nosara and Sámara. As we can see in the Table 4 below, the Canton of Nicoya has risen in terms of its position among the Cantons, but it is still in the lowest 20% of Cantons in Costa Rica in terms of Human Poverty Index. This likely indicates as well that specific conditions in the districts are also likely to have improved only slightly over the past decade.

**Table 4: Index of Human Poverty for the Canton of Nicoya**

Components of IPH include: Poverty rates, Probability of not living past age 60, Less than a 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade education, Long term unemployment			
Canton of Nicoya	2000	2005	2009
Position among the 81 Cantons in the Human Poverty Index	73rd	69th	66th

The above analysis shows that poverty is deeply rooted in the Districts of Nosara and Sámara and progress to impact the root causes has been slow. When only one out of four young people graduate from high school, large segments of the population are stuck in dead end, menial jobs or face long term unemployment. Crime rates climb when poverty is entrenched. Large discrepancies between rich and poor feed discontent and delinquency. Protecting the environment takes on a low priority when adequate shelter and/or access to health care are unavailable. More and bigger tourism has not been a silver bullet and much more careful focus is needed to promote high value sustainable and socially responsible tourism businesses. In addition, existing government programs have not been successful in lowering poverty nor increasing education and employment readiness, particularly for skilled and permanent jobs.

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<sup>34</sup> Atlas of Human Development 2012

### III. Expenditures and Revenues: Canton of Nicoya

This section will look at the financial data that is available by District and Canton including budgets and expenditures from 2009 to 2012 and the property tax revenues collected for 2013. This study was not meant to take the place of an external audit nor track any specific expenditure over time. Trends and patterns, however, may become evident as aggregate data is compiled and examined.

#### **Expenditures**

The annual budget expenditures for the Canton are broken down into 3 categories or programs: Program I, General Administration costs; Program II, Services, which includes garbage collection, some general road maintenance, care of cemeteries and parks among others; and Program III, Investments, referred to herein as Projects, which consists largely of road maintenance and some special projects such as improvements to schools or community centers. Thanks to the help and support of the Municipal office of Nicoya, the Mayor, the office of engineers and project management and the Comptroller's Office for the Canton of Nicoya, the budgetary information for Program III, Investments/Projects, was broken down by District for the period from 2009 through 2012. The following graphs and tables are drawn from the data provided by these offices.

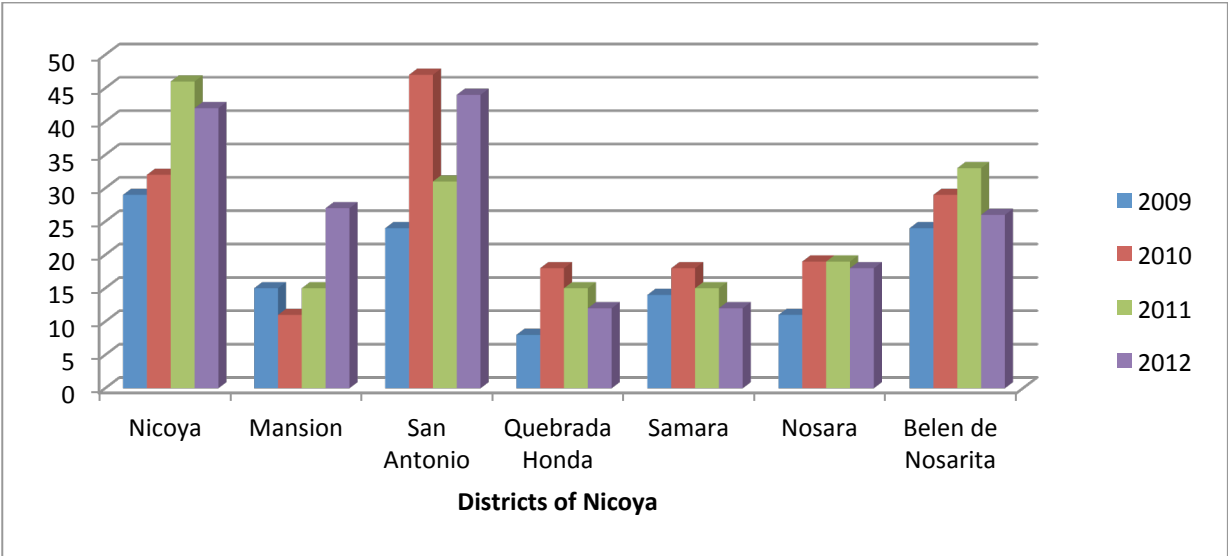
Understanding the budget information and disbursement of funds has proved challenging. In many cases, funding is allocated for projects, which may not be completed or, in some cases, even started within the year that they were proposed and thus balances are carried forward to other years. In other cases, budgets may have been proposed based on projected revenues which were not collected or on property taxes, which were later exempted. This report does not attempt to reflect or track these figures from year to year. Rather we have looked for patterns or trends that might be helpful for future planning.

Annual budgets for projects are shown as projected vs. executed. Projected projects are broken down by district and year and the total number of proposed projects for each district over the four year period is reflected in the aggregate numbers. No analysis was done to compare the actual amounts of funds allocated for projects for all district as the variables are too numerous and/or descriptors of projects often too vague. For example, ₡5,460,000 was budgeted for Nambi – Nicoya district for routine maintenance while ₡2,310,000 was allocated for Nosara – Santa Teresita also for routine maintenance. Nothing, however, was specified as to the extent of completion of each project, nor was there any clarification as to the type of maintenance. Some of this information may be available through the office of the mayor, but is not within the scope of this current study.

Graph # 4 below shows the number of projects budgeted per year for each of Nicoya's seven districts. Nicoya District is the largest population center with 22,840 people, three times as large as the next most populated district, so it is logical to assume that it would require the most maintenance and

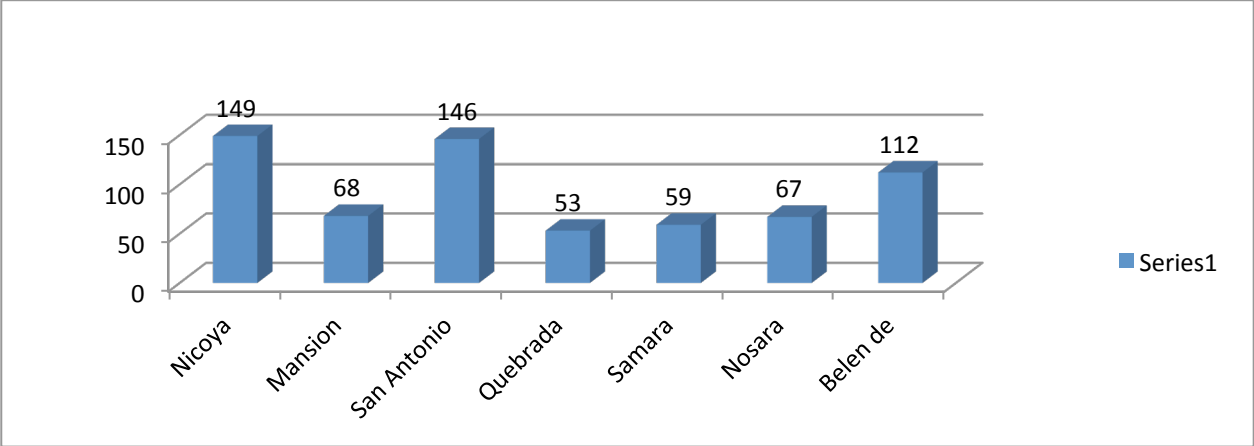
infrastructure improvements and therefore have a larger number of projects undertaken. On the other hand, the Districts of Quebrada Honda, Belen de Nosarita, Nosara and Sámara have similar populations; 2,476, 2,288, 3,168 and 2,932 respectively. Yet Sámara and Quebrada Honda appear to have fewer projects proposed during the same time period, and San Antonio, with a population of 7,032 has almost as many projects as Nicoya.

**Graph 4: Number of Projects proposed by District and by Year, 2009-2012**



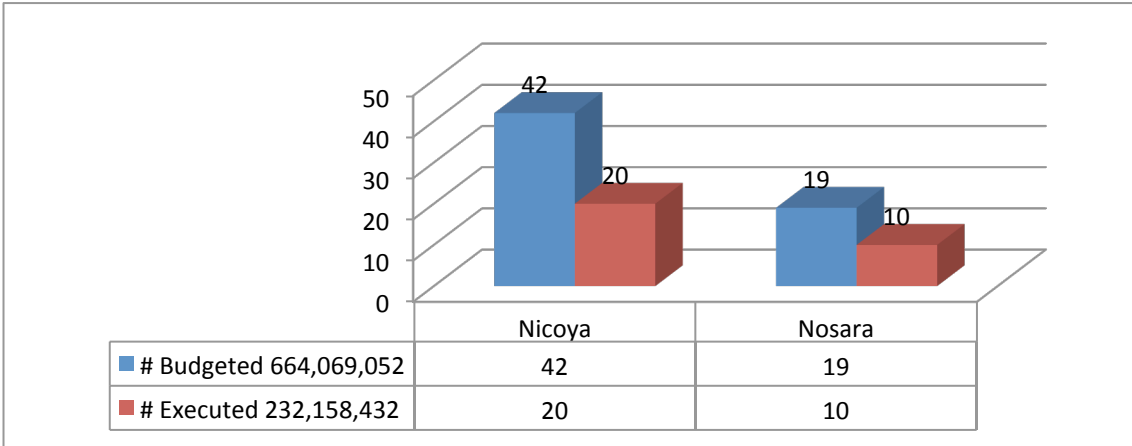
In terms of the total number of projects proposed over the 4 year period, while Nicoya District had 149 projects, San Antonio had 146 projects proposed, Belen de Nosarita, 112, while Nosara had 67 and Sámara had 50. The large number of budgeted projects for Belen de Nosarita that has a much smaller population may be as a response to their greater needs. Belen de Nosarita, as was shown above, was the district and that had the lowest coefficient in the Index of Human Poverty according to the 2000 census. There was improvement in that District by the 2011 census, perhaps explaining the larger number of projects for the area. Even so, Belén de Nosarita still had the highest level of unmet basic needs of all of the districts of the Canton between 49% to 63% of all households lacking in one or more basic needs.

**Graph 5 – Total Number of Projected Projects per District, 2009-2012**



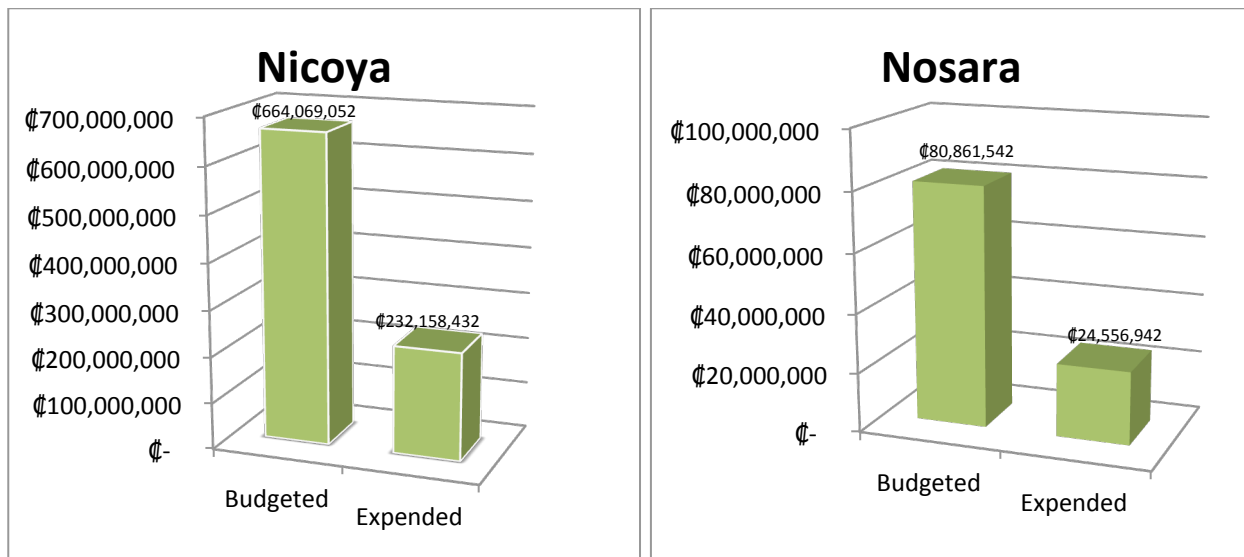
One possible explanation for the lack of further improvement in each district might lay in the discrepancy between the projects budgeted and actual projects executed. For 2012, for example, the number of projects executed for the District of Nicoya was less than 50% and for Nosara just slightly above 50%. In terms of the funds allocated for the projects in Nicoya in 2012, only 35% was actually expended, or ₡232,158,432 of ₡664,069,052 budgeted. For Nosara this same year the expenditure was closer to 30% or ₡24,556,942 of the ₡80,861,542 allocated for projects.

**Graph 6 - Number of Projects Budgeted vs. Executed for 2012 for the Districts of Nicoya and Nosara.**



As was mention previously, there may be several explanations for these large discrepancies, perhaps the projected budgets did not reflect actual revenues collected and/or projects might not have been completed but underway, held over for the following year, or in some cases funds may have been diverted for emergencies or other needs. However, other years show similar patterns.

**Graph 7: Figures in Colones of Projects Budgeted vs. Implemented for Districts of Nicoya & Nosara, 2012**



It is also important to note that the vast majority of the projects budgeted for the District of Nosara, whether implemented or not, were almost entirely for road maintenance or improvements to drainage systems. (A complete breakdown of the projects intended for Nosara with their corresponding budgets is available in Appendix 1 for the four years from 2009 to 2012). But of the 67 projects proposed during this time only about 15 were for anything other than road maintenance, drainage or sewers and of those 15 only five came to fruition. Approximately 70 million colones (~\$140,000) was expended on roads and drainage for the four years with about 10.5 million colones (\$21,000) allocated to other projects such as schools or community or health centers.

These figures reflect funds only available through Program III of the District Budget. Program II of the Budget, Services, includes equally important functions for the Canton as a whole, however, these were not broken out by District and therefore this data could not be analyzed for this report. Other road maintenance, road cleaning and safety are included in Program II, as well as, garbage collection and treatment, parks and beautification, markets, plazas and fairs, education, culture and sports, bus terminals, improvements in coastal areas, environmental protection, management services and emergency care. The total budget expended from Program II for the entire Canton was about 800 million colones (~\$1,600,000). In addition, some Canton functions are, in practice, handled by the District. For instance, even though garbage collection is listed as falling under Program III of the Canton, the government of Nicoya only takes care of the garbage collection and treatment for the Districts of Nicoya and Samara.

### **Revenues Streams**

Canton governments base their annual budgets on several different revenue streams, but the two major sources come either directly from the Central Government or what is referred to as “Tributes”. Tributes

are defined as “benefits (taxes, fees and special taxes), that the State, in exercise of its power to rule, required in order to obtain resources for the fulfillment of its purposes.”<sup>35</sup>

**Table 5: Canton of Nicoya Revenue that comes from the following tributes/taxes:**

<b>Income from taxes (tributes)</b>	<b>Non-tax income</b>
Property taxes	Sale of goods and services
Taxes on goods and services	Income from property
Special tributes	Fines, sanctions or confiscations
	Interest on outstanding debts
	Interest on capital

For the purposes of this study we will concentrate solely on the revenue generated from property taxes as that is the largest contributor to local government.

**Property Taxes**

Historically property taxes in Costa Rica have been very low, 0.25% of the value of the property as registered with the municipal government; a value often set by the property owners themselves. If a property is valued at ₡17,073,000 (~\$34,150) or less and if the individual owns or has registered in his or her name only one property within the country, this property can be exempted from all property taxes.<sup>36</sup> Because there is not a system in place throughout most of the country for assessing actual or current property values, many properties are vastly undervalued and consequently either exempted from taxes or pay a very low rate. It is impossible to estimate how many properties within each district qualify for this exemption; however, it inevitably affects the amount of property taxes collected per district. Consequently, revenues collected from property taxes are generally much lower than sometimes projected by local governments for budgeting purposes.

Also property values vary extremely from district to district and even within districts so that what taxes are collected show huge disparities. Market values in Nosara, according to one long time realtor from the area, may be around \$300 to \$350 per square meter for ocean front or \$80 to \$150 per square meter for an ocean view property. In the town of Nosara, however, unimproved properties might sell for as low as \$10 to \$30 a square meter and large farms further inland might sell for only a few dollars per square meter. Homes in Nosara, currently on the market sell from \$100,000 to over \$2,000,000. The other Districts in the Canton with the exception of Sámara, are mostly farm land, forest or cattle ranches, which have lower land values and therefore, much lower property taxes. Still there is great disparity between the districts in terms of taxes collected.

In order to try to establish an idea of the variability in taxes paid per district, we took the total amount collected per district in 2013 and divided by the total population as reported in the 2011 Census. More

<sup>35</sup> Municipalidad de Nicoya. Tributos, Impuestos y Tasas. [www.municipalidadnicoya.go.cr](http://www.municipalidadnicoya.go.cr)

<sup>36</sup> Controller’s Office, Canton of Nicoya

current population figures are not available. Consequently the figures reported below are not exact as the population may have changed slightly over the past two years. Even so, the variation in the amount of taxes paid per person in each of the Districts is striking (See Table 6)

**Table 6: Property taxes paid per person in each District of the Canton of Nicoya**

Nicoya	Mansión	San Antonio	Quebrada Honda	Sámara	Nosara	Belén de Nosarita
₡ 7,391	₡ 4,586	₡ 4,671	₡ 4,419	₡ 32,839	₡ 42,242	₡ 5,705

The taxes paid per person shows vast discrepancies. According to these records people in Nosara and Sámara pay almost five to six times more in property taxes than people in the more densely populated areas of Nicoya and between 7 to 9.5 times more than people in other districts.

The records from the Controller's office for the District of Nicoya list the property taxes collected by monetary amount and by number of properties. To see if this gave us a different picture we divided total property taxes collected by the total number of properties. (See Table 7)

**Table 7: Property taxes paid per property in each District of Nicoya**

Nicoya	Mansión	San Antonio	Quebrada Honda	Sámara	Nosara	Belen de Nosarita
₡ 9,615	₡ 6,304	₡ 6,997	₡ 6,444	₡ 25,741	₡ 20,995	₡ 8,220

It appears that properties in Sámara and Nosara paid between 2 to 3 times more property taxes than did properties in the city and surrounding areas of Nicoya and five to six times more than properties in the more rural areas such as Mansión or Quebrada Honda. This can be attributed to the higher values placed on these properties.

**Table 8: Total Property Taxes paid per District in 2013**

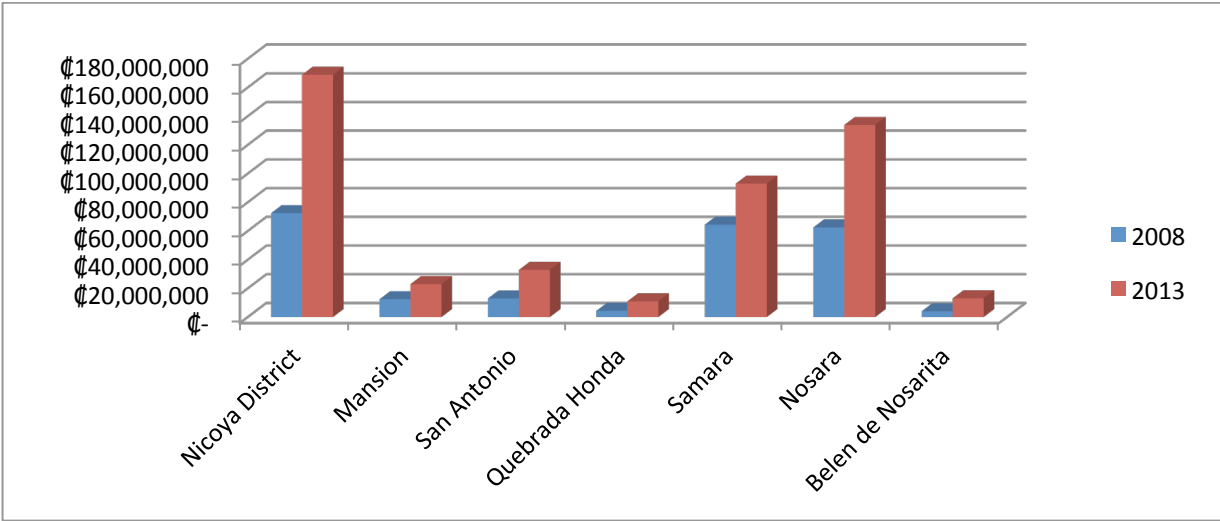
Nicoya	Mansión	San Antonio	Quebrada Honda	Sámara	Nosara	Belen de Nosarita
₡ 168,808,666	₡ 22,971,820	₡ 32,849,005	₡ 10,942,105	₡ 93,000,795	₡ 133,824,164	₡ 13,052,850

It is difficult to look at historical trends for property taxes that have been collected over the years because the accounting system for the Canton does not keep records of taxes paid on a yearly basis. The amounts paid for 2013 were available through the Office of the Controller and one other year, 2008, was available from a resident in Nosara who had obtained it earlier. All other years back to 1996 are aggregated into one total so it is not possible to compare data from year to year to verify this pattern over time.



However, comparing 2008 and 2013 in Graph 8, we can see that in most cases taxes have at least doubled in the last five years with the exception of Sámara where taxes have only increased by about 30%, from ₡64,389,181 in 2008 to ₡93,000,790 in 2013. Nosara’s property taxes during this same time grew from ₡62,402,490 in 2008 to ₡133,824,164 in 2013. However, while the population in Sámara grew only by about 900 people from 2008 to 2011 according to the last census, Nosara’s population increased by slightly over 2000 , could account for at least some of the higher total taxes paid in the District of Nosara.

**Graph 8: Property Taxes Paid per District in 2008 & 2013**



**Comparing Property Taxes Collected to Public Works Expenditures**

It must be emphasized that the total taxes collected in 2013 might still increase as these figures only reflect the amount collected through the end of September, 2013. Likewise exact budget expenditures for 2013 are not available for the same reason. However, for the sake of comparison we can look at the total of property taxes collected to date for 2013, (the only annual figures available since 2008) and the budget amount expended in 2012 on projects for both Nicoya and Nosara. When we compare these figures for Nicoya and Nosara we find the following:

**Table 9: Property Taxes Collected vs. Amounts Expended for the Districts of Nicoya & Nosara, 2012 and 2013**

Total Taxes Collected from the District of Nicoya through September 2013	₡ 168,808,666	Taxes Collected from the District of Nosara through September, 2013	₡ 133,824,164
Funds Expended on Projects in Nicoya 2012	₡ 232,158,432	Funds Expended on Projects in Nosara 2012	₡ 24,556,942

As per an article published in the *Guanacaste Voice* in November 2013, “There are no laws which require that the taxes collected in one District be designated for that District. The Government of the Canton has the liberty to decide how the taxes will be used.” And it must be pointed out that in 2012 the District of Nicoya experienced one of the worst earthquakes on record and consequently in that year and probably also in 2013, some taxes were designated to meet the costs required to confront this emergency situation. However, the majority of relief funds come from the Central Government. Therefore when one looks at the period from 2009 to 2012, it is easy to extrapolate that even though revenues generated from property taxes along in the coastal districts of Nosara and Sámara are much greater proportionately than in any other district, the funds expended on projects, including road improvements and/or maintenance are proportionately very small.

#### **IV. Strengthening Nosara and Sámara as Sustainable Tourism Destinations**

The economies of Nosara and neighboring coastal communities are heavily dependent on tourism, both vacation homes and residential home. Nosara’s beaches have been featured in the *New York Times* as "charming" and in *National Geographic Traveler* as "about as close to paradise as it gets." In December 2013, CNN Travel named Nosara as one of the world’s top “11 places to go to in 2014.”<sup>37</sup> Despite its growing international reputation, to date, Nosara and its neighboring beach communities have not experienced the rapid and often ill-planned growth of large-scale resort tourism that characterizes other Guanacaste beaches located nearer the international airport in Liberia. Rather, most of the tourism infrastructure is smaller scale and much of it conforms to best practices in sustainable design, construction, and operations.

This picture could, however, change rapidly, especially once the access roads are improved and paved. Careful planning is required at the District level to ensure that Nosara and Sámara continue to protect and strengthen high value –rather than high volume –models of tourism.

Very few hotels have taken the step to become certified in sustainable tourism. In Sámara only one hotel of the forty that are listed with the Ministry of Tourism s has a Sustainable Tourism Certification (CST). In Nosara, 4 hotels of the 25 listed have undergone the process, one of which, the Harmony Hotel has achieved the highest ranking. It is possible that there are almost as many homes that have become certified for sustainable practices as there are certified tourism businesses. It is innovative and laudable that the practice of certifying homes was started in Nosara and that residents show their commitment to sustainable practices in their own homes and lifestyles. But it is equally important that businesses operate with the same focus and criteria.

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<sup>37</sup> Tamara Hinson, CNN Travel, “11 Places to go to in 2014,” December 14, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/13/travel/best-destinations-2014/index.html?iref=allsearch>.

Exact numbers of visitors to the region are unverifiable. The ICT office in Nicoya does not track that information because, “it is measured at the country level and hence, tourist visits to different areas are only estimates.”<sup>38</sup> (See Table 10)

**Table 10: Distribution of International Visitors by Tourism Planning Unit 2012**

	Percentage	Number of tourist arrivals
<b>Total international arrivals<sup>2</sup></b>	-	<b>1.879.831</b>
Caribbean	21,7	407.921
Guanacaste	42,5	798.606
Llanuras del Norte	25,7	482.679
Pacífico Medio	25,7	482.562
Pacífico Sur	11,6	217.370
Puntarenas	26,6	499.291
Valle Central	75,2	1.412.883

1) Quantity of tourists who spend at least one night in the Designated Zone (UPT)

2) Total number of arrivals according to the Department of Migration and Foreign Visitors excluding Nicaraguans who entered by land.

Source: Surveys of non-residents, ICT

In addition, as outlined above, just out of sight of the tourist gaze, these communities also face poverty, inadequate education, and problems with law enforcement, waste management, water and many other ills. The Nosara Civic Association (NCA), representing the maritime zone and local parklands is committed to addressing environmental, social and economic issues that are currently left unaddressed by a largely absent Canton of Nicoya government. While NCA is considering a range of creative options, CREST, given its expertise in sustainable tourism, would like to offer several innovative strategies that are currently being pioneered in other destinations.

### Expanding Sustainable Tourism Certification for Beaches and Hotels

Costa Rica has been a leader in international initiatives to create certification programs that measure the environmental, social and economic impacts of different components of the tourism industry. Two of Costa Rica’s ‘green’ certification programs – Ecological Blue Flag (BAE) and Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) – are particularly important in helping to ensure that coastal tourism adheres to internationally recognized criteria for sustainability. Both are voluntary and both are run by the government. We believe that by expanding the use of these programs, Nosara and Sámara could strengthen their sustainable good practices and help to protect their growing international reputation for small-scale socially and environmentally responsible tourism.

<sup>38</sup> Costa Rica Tourist Institute (ICT), Nicoya office

- **Ecological Blue Flag**

By 2013, 90 beaches in Costa Rica, most of them along the Pacific coast, had been certified under the Ecological Blue Flag (BAE) program. These include the major tourism beaches in and around Nosara and Sámara, including Pelada, Guiones, Ostional, Sámara, Sámara Sur and Buena Vista.

**Map 5: Ecological Blue Flag Certified Beaches in Costa Rica, 2011**



Source: VisitCostaRica.com, <http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/mapas/areasurf.asp>

The Ecological Blue Flag, modeled after a successful European program, was introduced in Costa Rica 1995 in response to the imminent dangers of beach pollution and its impact on public health and the tourism industry. The program relies on inter-institutional cooperation. The participating agencies include the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT), National Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR), Costa Rican Water and Sewage Institute (AyA), Ministry of Environment (MINAE), Ministry of Public Health (MINSa), and Ministry of Education.

The BAE program is an annual certification, granted every year to those beach communities that have scored a minimum 90% for all requirements. To do so, each beach and coastal community is rated on a scale of one to five stars, taking into account the following criteria:

- Ocean water quality (35%)
- Quality of potable water (15%)
- Quality of coastal sanitation areas:
  - Coastal garbage and garbage containers (10%)
  - Treated industrial waste in coastal areas (5%)
  - Treated run-off water in coastal areas (15%)
  - Environmental education (10%)
  - Security and administration (10%)
- Total: 100%

BAE has also been willing to publicly remove Blue Flag status from beaches that fail to maintain water quality or other standards. In April 2009, for instance, 26 Guanacaste beaches were among those that earned BAE certification, while two Guanacaste beaches – El Coco Norte and Hermosa – lost their flags. These demoted beaches had high levels of fecal contamination of their waters.

In terms of meeting standards for sustainable coastal tourism, Ecological Blue Flag has been the country’s most important voluntary certification program. It has successfully brought together government and private institutions at both the local and national level to implement and oversee the program. Its annual inspections ensure that beaches are regularly assessed and the results publicly announced. Since pristine beaches and clean ocean water are the foundation on which coastal tourism is built, the winners and losers of Blue Flag rating are closely monitored by coastal communities, the media, and the tourism industry. Increasing numbers of tourists to Costa Rica and elsewhere around the world, seek beaches that have Blue Flag flying on them in order to be sure that the beach and coastal water conditions are healthy and safe.

**Table 11: Ecological Blue Flag: Distribution of Star Ratings per Region**

Rating	Northern Guanacaste	Southern Guanacaste	Puntarenas	Central Pacific	Southern Pacific	Northern Caribbean	Southern Caribbean	Total
<b>1 star</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>2 stars</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 stars</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4 stars</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5 stars</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>90</b>

Source: Marisol Arias, “90 National Beaches Won the Blue Flag Recognition,” *Tamarindo News*, May 6, 2013, [http://tamarindonews.com/national\\_news/90\\_national\\_beaches\\_won\\_the\\_blue\\_flag\\_recognition.html](http://tamarindonews.com/national_news/90_national_beaches_won_the_blue_flag_recognition.html).

As Table 11 shows, the great majority of BAE certified beaches in Costa Rica have obtained only level one. The requirements to achieve the top ranking of five-stars are rigorous, requiring not only a 90%-100% score on the above criteria, but also disabled access, recycling initiative, car and horse restrictions,

year-round security and rescue teams, and more. Only two beaches in Costa Rica have achieved the five star rating: Punta Leona and Punta del Madero Beach.

Of the 11 certified beaches in Southern Guanacaste, which includes Nosara and Sámara, 10 have only one star and one has two stars. This demonstrates that there is ample room for Nosara and Sámara's beaches to improve their rating and therefore their attraction for international tourism. In order to better protect public health and safety for its residents, as well as its reputation for quality tourism, Nosara and Sámara need to ensure that all its beaches are certified under the BAE program. In our view, NCA plays a key role in promoting Blue Flag certification for Nosara and other area beaches.

- **Certification for Hotels: Five Star Rating and Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)**

Costa Rica has two certification programs for hotels, both run by the ICT. The oldest, the Five Star Rating assesses hotels based on quality, service, and price, and is part of a well-established international program. Virtually all of the estimated 3000 tourist hotels in Costa Rica are certified under this program, which rates hotels on a range of one to five stars. The star rating is designed to ensure a service level that meets international tourist quality standards of customer service, building conditions, and the facilities available to the tourist in all areas.

While not required to obtain a license, hotels seeking a Tourist Declaration (described above) or certification under the CST program (see below), must obtain at least a one star rating. In practice, all hotels in Costa Rica catering to an international market are certified under the Five Star program.

Beginning in 1997, the Star Rating system was complemented by the home-grown Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program to assess the environmental, social, and economic impacts of operating hotels based on a rigorous check list of some 150 criteria. CST conducts onsite audits using an accreditation committee, which includes government, academic, and private sector professionals. Based on the hotel's score, CST awards one to five green leaves. The program is designed to cover all types and sizes of hotels and not simply small ecolodges. The architects of CST felt strongly that if the country were to remain competitive internationally, the larger, more conventional hotels also needed to abide by responsible environmental and social principles.

The hotels' evaluation of sustainability involves the analysis of four general areas:

- Physical-biological environment
- Hotel facilities (internal environmental management practices)
- Customers
- Socio-economic environment

To classify a hotel the CST uses six sustainability levels that go from zero to five. (This is similar to the traditional 'star' categorization used for hotels). The sustainability level assigned to a hotel depends on its percentage of compliance with the standards established by the categorization questionnaires.

**Table 12: CST Levels of Sustainability**

<b>Level of sustainability</b>	<b>Minimum percentage of compliance for all four general areas</b>
0	< 20
1	20-39
2	40-59
3	60-79
4	80-94
5	> 94

Source: "CST Levels," Costa Rica Tourism Board, <http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/cst/niveles.asp>

The CST program was quickly hailed internationally as an innovative, well designed program, Unfortunately, its growth was stunted during its early years by bureaucratic inertia and squabbling, limited funds, small staff, and poor promotion. However, since 2005, CST has received increasing support from within the ICT. More marketing funds began to be dedicated to promoting CST certified hotels, more hotels were certified, and a new certification program for tour operators was launched. By 2010, 98 hotels, along with many others hotels were waiting to be audited. By 2013, the number of certified hotels had jumped to 217, including 34 in Guanacaste.<sup>39</sup> In Sámara only one hotel of the forty that are listed with the Ministry of Tourism as providing rooms for tourists is CST certified while in Nosara, 4 hotels of the 25 registered hotels are CST certified. One, Harmony Hotel, has achieved the highest ranking of five green leaves.

To assess the utility of CST as a tool for sustainable coastal development, CREST conducted a survey in 2010 of managers or owners of ten certified hotels (ranging from 16 to 129 rooms) along the Pacific coast. All said they had invested large amounts of time training staff and adjusting their operating procedures to meet CST criteria, and seven reported that they had invested between \$120,000 and \$2 million to purchase new equipment to comply with CST's environmental standards. However, those surveyed said that by following CST procedures, their hotels have saved on the cost of energy—especially electricity—and water, and have standardized and improved their internal operations. In addition, they are receiving preferential treatment from the ICT in marketing, trade show discounts, and other promotions.

The hoteliers interviewed concluded that, despite the investment required, CST has been a valuable program for their own operations and they said that if more coastal hotels enroll and marketing is enhanced, it could become an important tool for ensuring sustainable coastal development. They agreed that CST or some similar program should be used at the design and construction – not just the operational – stages and that CST should be expanded to include vacation home complexes. Finally, seven of the ten said that CST should be mandatory for hotels, residential and vacation home developments, while the other three said that it should continue to

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<sup>39</sup> CREST, *The Impact of Tourism Related Development along Costa Rica's Pacific Coast*, Summary Report, April 2010, pp. 54-56; Certification for Sustainable Tourism, [http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/index.php?option=com\\_mtree&task=listcats&cat\\_id=96&Itemid=50&lang=en](http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=listcats&cat_id=96&Itemid=50&lang=en).

be voluntary but that the government should provide a range of incentives -- tax credits, low interest loans, and duty-free imports for 'green' products -- that would help encourage more coastal hotels to become certified.<sup>40</sup>

Complaints about CST have persisted, even from longtime supporters such as the Cayuga Collection , that manages the Harmony Hotel and a collection of other high-end CST-certified hotels. In a recent blog, Cayuga's CEO Hans Pfister wrote, "The [CST] program has helped us in the first years to order and organize our sustainability efforts....But the world changed. As the years passed, the CST became more and more bureaucratic and for many hotels, the focus was on "getting the leaves" instead of working on real sustainability programs that have a strong impact on the environment and the community."<sup>41</sup> Central to well informed criticisms such as this is a concern that CST criteria is onerous for small hotels, while CST may not be holding large hotels to high enough standards for sustainability.

What does this mean for Nosara and Sámara? It clear that, after some 15 years of operations, CST clearly needs serious reform if it is to continue to be an effective tool for hotel certification. The program should not, however, be abandoned because Nosara, Sámara, and other Costa Rica tourism destinations need standards against which to measure their environmental and social impacts. Pfister and other tourism leaders have created a task force and they plan, during 2014, to hold meetings with ICT to urge reforms to strengthen CST as an effective tool for sustainability.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, Nosara is demonstrating in other ways its commitment to sustainable practices. Town residents have initiated an innovative and laudable program for certifying homes based on sustainable practices. With many houses rented to visitors, this new program was recognized by the Costa Rican Blue Flag program in 2012.

- **Destination-wide Standards and Guidelines**

Over the last several decades, 'green' certification efforts have focused on individual tourism businesses and beaches. However, in recent years there has been growing recognition that tourism destinations as a whole also need to be measured against specific social and environment criteria in order to guarantee and protect their sustainability. Several certification programs have begun to develop destination wide certification programs. For instance, the Instituto de Turismo Responsable (ITR) in Spain has launched the Biosphere Responsible Tourism destination standard ([www.biospherehotels.org](http://www.biospherehotels.org)). The EarthCheck Certified Community standard ([www.earthcheck.org/solutions.aspx](http://www.earthcheck.org/solutions.aspx) ) is also designed for the certification of communities. And Audubon Sustainable Communities

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<sup>40</sup> Martha Vega, "Certification of Sustainable Tourism and Climate Change: Overviews within the Frame of the Current Economic Crisis," final report, prepared for Center for Responsible Travel, 2010, [http://www.responsibletravel.org/resources/documents/Coastal-tourism-documents/Impact\\_of\\_Tourism\\_Related\\_Development\\_on\\_the\\_Pacific\\_Coast\\_of\\_Costa%20Rica.pdf](http://www.responsibletravel.org/resources/documents/Coastal-tourism-documents/Impact_of_Tourism_Related_Development_on_the_Pacific_Coast_of_Costa%20Rica.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Hans Pfister, "Our struggles with the CST Sustainability Certification in Costa Rica," Cayuga Collection blog, November 27, 2013..

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



[www.auduboninternational.org/sustainable-communities-program](http://www.auduboninternational.org/sustainable-communities-program)) is a set of community indicators and certification currently implemented only in the U.S.

These efforts took a step forward when, on November 1, 2013, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), an international organization based at the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), ratified the first international standard for sustainable tourism destinations, known as the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D). This culminated a three-year period of consolidating and seeking the common elements of nearly 40 sets of guidelines, indicators, and certification standards for destinations. The GSTC-D are designed to:

- serve as a common denominator for communication about sustainable destinations;
- establish guidelines for what destinations should do to become more sustainable;
- serve as a starting point for developing regulations within a destination;
- harmonize and recognize compatible destination certification standards;
- reinforce the implementation and marketing of the certification of hotels, tour operators, and other activities in the destination; and
- highlight sustainable destinations for consumers.

The GSTC-D are divided into four thematic areas:

- SECTION A: Demonstrate sustainable destination management.
- SECTION B: Maximize economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts.
- SECTION C: Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts.
- SECTION D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

The 41 criteria are the basic principles of the actions a destination should implement to become more sustainable, and the approximately 100 recommended performance indicators suggest possible ways to measure compliance with each criterion.

There are two main implementation methods for the GSTC-D: recognizing destination certification standards that are aligned with the criteria and a GSTC program for on-site evaluation and gap analysis of the early adopters of the criteria. The recognition of compatible certification standards by GSTC will begin in December 2013, whereas the early adopter program has been underway for two years and serves to field test the criteria and indicators, help destinations move towards sustainability, and offer interim recognition while the certification standards are being evaluated for alignment.

- **GSTC Early Adopter program**

The GSTC Early Adopter program is designed to benefit destinations by conducting an evaluation of the destination by a consultant, who will collect relevant preliminary information, conduct an on-site verification exercise in the destination and present the outcomes to the destination management organization. The objectives are to assist the destination in moving towards sustainability by determining the degree of implementation of the GSTC-D, and suggest areas for improvement. The results will also be used as feedback for the applicability of the GSTC-D performance indicators.

The process is designed to facilitate certification of the destination by an independent certification body. In the meantime, GSTC offers benefits to the destination, such as recognition through the GSTC website, social media and a press release, membership in the GSTC, etc. Over the past several years, GSTC has been working with a small number of destinations, including Jackson Hole and Yellowstone in Montana; Lake Llanquihue in Chile, and Cusco region in Peru to field test the GSTC-D criteria. Nosara might consider joining the Early Adopter program, with the aim of having the entire community certified as an internationally recognized sustainable destination. Like Blue Flag certification, the GSTC-D requires collaboration across the community and can therefore be an effective tool for community discussion and decision making. Designation as a sustainable destination would further enhance Nosara's international reputation and differentiate it from other Pacific coast beach communities, which have succumbed to intense, large scale, and often poorly planned development.

### Destination-wide Community and Travelers' Philanthropy

Travelers' philanthropy initiatives have spread around the world and are proving to be an important tool for increasing community participation; deepening ties between tourism businesses, travelers and local residents; and generating resources for community projects and priorities. Over the last decade, CREST has been the leading organization promoting and supporting travelers' philanthropy initiatives around the world. Put succinctly, "travelers' philanthropy is tourism businesses and travelers making concrete contributions of 'time, talent, and treasure' to local projects *beyond what is generated through the normal tourism business.*"

As CREST's *Travelers' Philanthropy Handbook* explains, "Travelers' philanthropy is not about collecting loose change for charities; rather, it is about integrating tourism company and visitor support for local communities into the core definition of responsible travel. It is also about:

- Helping tourism businesses become actively involved as 'good citizens' in their travel destinations.
- Assisting local projects that provide a 'hand up' not a 'hand out;' that is, projects that promote social empowerment, education, and entrepreneurship that lead to sustainable, long-term development and environmental conservation.
- Enriching the travel experience through meaningful, culturally sensitive, and productive interactions with people in host communities."<sup>43</sup>

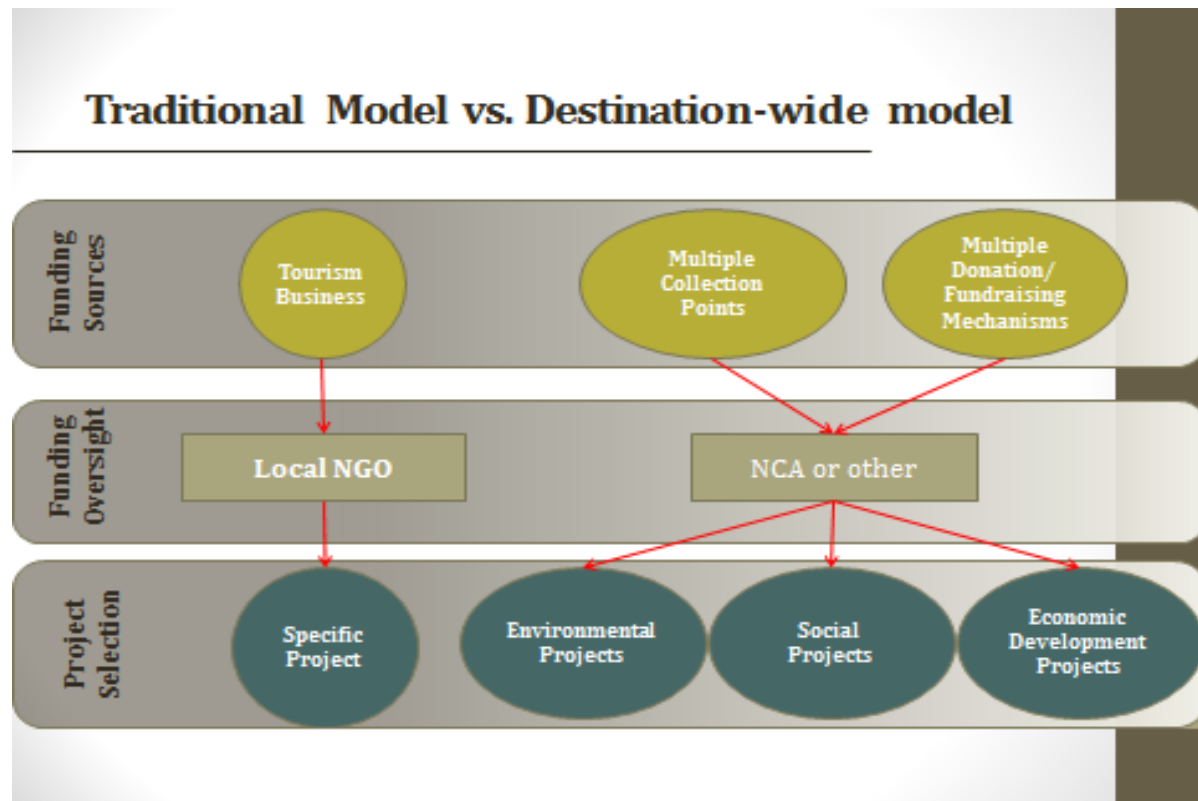
The rich tapestry of travelers' philanthropy covers all types of tourism businesses, from individual lodgings in a single location to international companies supporting travelers' philanthropy programs around the globe to destination-wide travel funds. For instance, Hotel Punta Islita, a coastal resort in

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<sup>43</sup> Martha Honey, ed., "Origins and Overview of Travelers' Philanthropy," *Travelers' Philanthropy Handbook*, Washington, DC: CREST, 2010, <http://www.responsibletravel.org/resources/documents/reports/Chapter%201.pdf>.

Costa Rica , hosts about 8000 guests a year, has worked with residents in several small rural communities to develop art and handicraft projects, a pre-school, an outdoor museum, and environmental education, along with a range of micro-enterprises. These benefits, plus the fact that 85% of the hotel's staff comes from the nearby communities, mean that half of every tourist dollar spent stays in the local area. Punta Islita has also developed not only a collection center for recycled materials, but has begun processing some of these recyclables on site so that less needs to be trucked out to other recycling centers farther away.

Like green hotel certification, travelers' philanthropy is also undergoing a transition from an activity spearheaded by individual hotels to one that is collectively supported by tourism businesses and community organizations within a destination. While to date most travelers' philanthropy programs involve initiatives by individual companies, a new pilot project begun in 2010 created a destination level Community and Travelers' philanthropy program in Monteverde, an area famous for its cloud forest and small scale ecotourism. This initiative, spearheaded by the Monteverde Institute and assisted by CREST, is working with local residents and tourism businesses to create a community fund through which anyone can contribute to projects that an advisory committee designates as priorities based on needs assessments of the community itself.



- **Developing a Destination-wide Travelers' and Community Philanthropy Program.**

Destination-level Travelers' and Community Philanthropy Initiatives seek to provide incentives for businesses and residents to undertake community investment programs and help to manage these investments more effectively through long term strategic planning and reporting so that impacts of donations can be linked to impacts and improvements .

A destination-level Philanthropy Initiative seeks to bridge the gaps created by lack of public funding and coordinated community efforts by putting in place a mechanism to channel multiple resources into planned community development based on needs identified within the community itself. From these resources, projects and programs that support the values of the community such as environmental protection, education, sustainable development and health care are selected to receive funds and technical assistance.

- **How would a destination-wide Travelers' Philanthropy Fund benefit Nosara?**

**Need for public/private sector collaboration.** As with most tourism destinations and ex-pat communities in developing countries, public institutions often lack or do not allocate the economic resources to fulfil community development needs. Central government funding and taxes, channelled through the local municipality or Canton, are inadequate to meet all basic infrastructure and service requirements. Other initiatives and collaborations between the public and private sectors are needed to bridge the gaps.

**Development and Tourism bring disadvantages and advantages.** Development and tourism have brought some benefits to these communities, but they have not necessarily delivered an equitable distribution of resources, nor have they effectively channelled the economic wealth of tourism or residents into local community development. A number of causal factors go toward explaining this failure, however, of most significance has been the lack of a community-level mechanism or organization to redirect the economic resources generated through increased growth of tourism and community philanthropy into community-led social, economic, and environmental development initiatives.

**Local Development Associations and Municipal leaders need to be involved.** The process of identifying, prioritizing and funding local public needs projects should be in the hands of community leaders, both elected officials and local residents. When Philanthropy Initiatives work with public agencies helping to provide financial resources, local governments can use this assistance to leverage other governmental resources. Examples of this include the work done at Lapa Rios where the hotel has built and continues to equip the first primary school in the area, and the Ministry of Education provides the teaching staff. In Monteverde, the Community Fund is helping to channel private resources to support the Municipalities' plan to place twenty recycling collection points throughout the community.

**Opportunities for corporate community investment and collaboration.** The vast majority of Nosara's registered businesses are tourism related. Despite the size and influence of the sector, corporate community investment is underdeveloped. Few tourism enterprises proactively make corporate contributions to community projects and programs, and even fewer solicit philanthropic donations from

tourists in a concerted and organized manner. For those that do, there is little communication about the end-projects into which these donations will be invested, or indeed, how they fit into the larger economic development of the community. Current community philanthropy is likewise lacking a coordinated focus with residents often contributing to individual projects or responding to emergencies on an as needed or as requested basis.

- **Investigating the Model in Monteverde**

Nosara has an opportunity to learn from and build on the Monteverde model in order to fast track the development of its own destination-wide program. Monteverde has already developed the institutional structure and protocols for an effective Community Fund. In Monteverde, for instance, once resources are collected from a variety of sources including; donations from travelers and businesses, sales of products and services and outside grants, a process for selecting projects and distributing funds comes into play. Monteverde has created an Evaluation Committee to select and fund local projects. The Committee includes a member of the City Council, a local representative from the Ministry of Health, an ex-pat scientist, a representative for the promotion of small and medium businesses, and a local farmer. This Committee evaluates the merit of proposals for local projects, which are then recommended for funding to the Board of the Community Fund. This type of public/private collaboration builds trust and transparency across the community at large and provides a platform to leverage other resources; local, governmental and international to meet community needs.

The success of the destination wide program in Monteverde is built on several factors, many of which are analogous to opportunities available in Nosara.

- Monteverde as a “zone” has an existing identity as a destination. It spans a large and diverse area, but the identity of “place”, Monteverde, is very strong.
- It is world renowned for its conservation efforts and protected forests attracting a large number of tourists annually. At the same time it strives to balance development with the preservation of the environment and has to date been able to keep large multi-national development at bay.
- It provides a wide range of tourist activities: adventure tourism, eco-tourism, educational and investigative tourism.
- Tourism businesses have developed locally and for the most part are still locally owned and operated. Most care deeply about their community and the environment where they live.
- Most businesses within the community, whether involved directly in tourism or not, are socially responsible enterprises that donate on a regular basis to support community projects and programs.
- Several businesses are seeking or have Sustainable Tourism Certification and supporting a destination travelers’ philanthropy program helps them qualify for and maintain their certification.
- There are interested, well informed and hardworking community leaders.

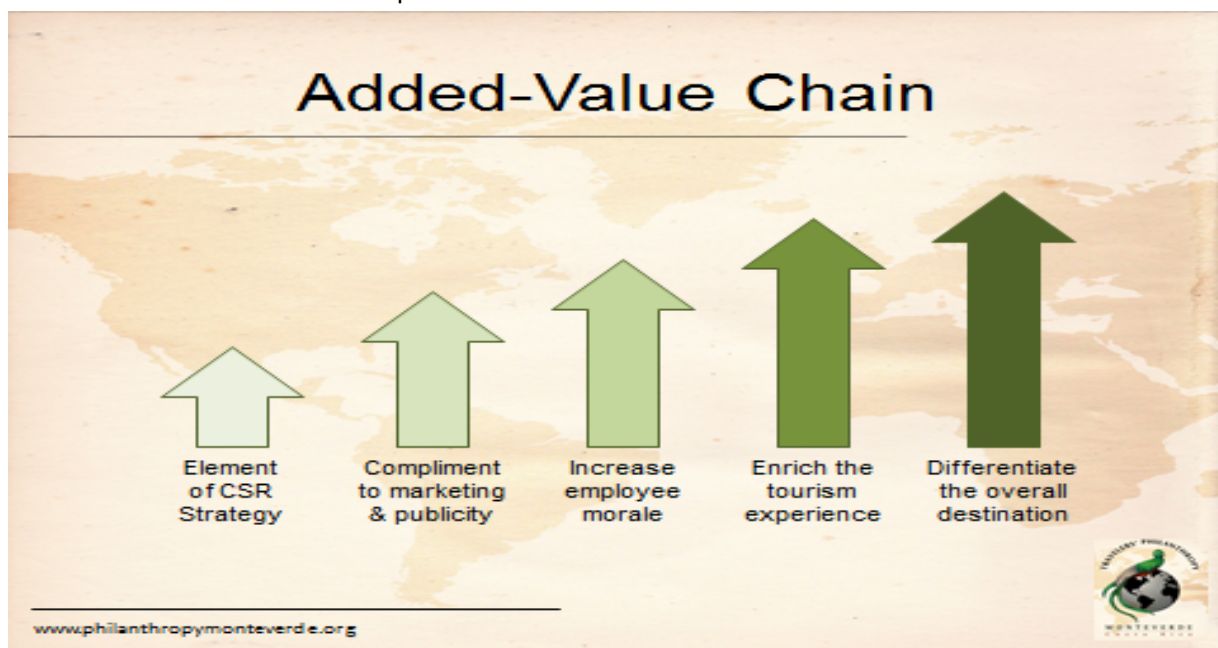
Nosara already has a highly conscientious travel market. The area is well known for health and wellness, yoga retreats, surfing and its beautiful beaches. It attracts a variety of travelers most of whom are

ecologically minded, responsible travelers. This is the perfect profile of a traveler who is interested in giving-back to the places they visit but often lack the opportunity or knowledge of how to proceed. In one survey done in Monteverde visitors were polled to see if they would be willing to contribute to community development. Overwhelmingly the answer was yes.

The Nosara Civic Association has almost 40 years of working together to preserve the natural beauty of the area and thwart over-development. Having an organization already in place is an important advantage to starting a Destination Wide Travelers' and Community Philanthropy program. A large number of businesses that have taken up home in Nosara feel a strong sense of social responsibility for their community and many are already involved in philanthropic endeavors of their own.

In a survey of businesses in Monteverde, 82% responded that they donated to community projects on an ongoing basis largely with monetary or material contributions, but also often through personnel volunteering or offering professional services. One of their main concerns expressed in that same survey, however, was that when giving to community groups and projects there was often little accountability or feedback about the impacts of their giving. One advantage of an organized destination wide program is to track impacts and provide feedback and recognition to those businesses, NGO's and others who are helping to create a better environment for all.

Value is added all along the way, to the destination, to the people who live and work there, and to the travelers who visit. A destination wide travelers' philanthropy program helps local business define their internal corporate social responsibility goals, one of the requirements for CST Certification. It enhances marketing as a destination and for individual businesses. Employee morale and teamwork is increased. Travelers' experience of the destination is enriched and the destination itself has an opportunity to differentiate itself in the market place.



Developed by Justin Welch, Executive Director Monteverde Community Fund, 2011

Community and Travelers' philanthropy builds assets, financial and otherwise. It builds capacity through organizational infrastructure, increased awareness, planning, communication and leadership development. And it builds trust through homegrown governance and transparent funding decisions.

In Nosara a number of tourism businesses are already actively involved in supporting community projects with funds, materials and expertise. The groundwork is in place to expand these efforts into a Travelers' Philanthropy and Community Fund, modeled after the one in Monteverde. Based on the findings of this study and conversations with NCA members and others in the community, we believe that creating a travelers' philanthropy program and organizing a Community Fund is a logical next step for NCA to undertake to deepen its commitment to sustainable tourism. Parallel with this, NCA will also be involved in a range of projects aimed at strengthen good governance in Nosara. An important tool for increasing local control and participation may be forming a District Advisory Council in Nosara. Once again, Monteverde offers an important model.

### Greater Home Rule through District Advisory Councils Governance

In Costa Rica there are 81 Municipalities, often referred to also as Cantons. These are led by Mayors and City Councils. Besides these there is another category referred to as Municipal District Councils (Concejos Municipales de Distrito), which are led by Municipal Directors and Advisors. This new municipal structure was created in 2001 with the passage of the Law #8173, which is still in effect. Eight of these District Councils exist in Costa Rica: Cervantes, Tukurrique, San Isidro de Penas Blancas, Colorado, Cóbano, Lepanto, Paquera and Monteverde. Monteverde was granted this status in 2003. Since that time no other Municipal District Councils have been established. However, if there is agreement from the Canton's elected officials such a process is still available to other districts. The law states that,

*"The creation of Municipal District Councils must be approved by at least two thirds of the total members of the Municipal Council of the Canton, if it has been duly requested by at least two hundred fifty inhabitants of the respective district, and only in such cases where districts are distant from the Central Offices of the Canton, according to the regulations previously issued by each municipality.*

*The establishment of such designation will be presented for popular comment, through publication in the Gazette and in at least one national newspaper and other Canton wide publication; it must have the support of at least fifteen percent (15%) of voters registered in the canton.<sup>44</sup>*

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<http://www.pgr.go.cr/scij/scripts/TextoCompleto.dll?Texto&nNorma=47712&nVersion=50680&nTamanoLetra=10>

Municipal District Councils were formed originally to provide more accountability and home rule for outlying areas, which were hampered in carrying out normal governmental functions due to their great physical distances from the Municipal/Canton Government offices.

Nosara lies 60 kilometers from the city of Nicoya where the Canton offices are located. Only 30 of those kilometers are on paved roads with the remaining 30 kilometers on roads that are sometimes almost impassable. It is reasonable to claim that these physical distances and conditions would justify the request for more autonomous governmental structures and the possible granting of a Municipal District Council for the area.

There are many advantages to forming a local Municipal District Council. With good cooperation from the Canton elected officials there can be better planning and more projects allocated to the District itself. However, at present, even having this governmental structure in place does not necessarily guarantee better governance or more services. It certainly seems to be a step in the direction of decentralization, a priority declared by the Central Government and, at least in the case of Monteverde, there have been great improvements in terms of convenience and more investment into the community. The problem at currently is that Municipal District Councils still do not have complete budgetary control.

According to the current Costa Rican Constitution, the eight existing Municipal District Councils are charged with providing services for their Districts. They are semi-autonomous but not independent from the Canton Government in that they do not have budgetary autonomy. The Law states that Municipal District Councils must submit their District budgets to the Canton. It then becomes the responsibility of the officers of the Canton to submit these revenue requests to the Comptroller of the Central Government for approval.

According to Florbeth Chacon, the Vice-Municipal Director for the Monteverde Municipal Council, at present a formal agreement has been reached with all of the Cantons where the Municipal Districts are located. The agreement stipulates that the Canton will receive and recognize the proposed budgets developed by the Municipal District Councils and will pass those along to the Controller of the Central Government without changes. The budgets presented in September of 2013 for the physical year 2014 represent the second year in which this agreement has been in effect.

This agreement, however, does not address the problem of complete autonomy over finances and budgets that has been requested by the Municipal District Councils. The problem of budgetary control was highlighted in early 2013 by Legislative Representative Agnes Gómez Franceschi, who commented that,

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*“Municipal District Councils at present depend absolutely on the municipalities (Cantons), which has given rise to a situation where resources for public works do not reach all communities and if they do they are very scarce.”*

There is currently a bill before the Legislature in Costa Rica, which hopes to rectify this problem and which might make this an even more workable alternative for Nosara. The bill would modify the current law, #8173, to grant District Councils greater autonomy and control over their own budgets. It appears to have broad support with the Legislature and passed the first debate late in 2013. A second debate is scheduled for early 2014. If the bill passes as expected in 2014, Municipal District Councils would be held to the same laws that govern Cantons and would be expected to provide the same services. This new legislation would guarantee that **income generated within the District comes under the jurisdiction of the District Council to allocate and administer and will no longer go to the Canton.**<sup>45</sup>

In January of 2013, Marco Ávila, the local elected deputy for the District of Nosara, declared in an interview for the local newspaper, the *La Voz de Nosara* that, “one of his biggest projects would be to establish the District of Nosara as an independent District headed by its own Advisory Council.” Sr. Avila also stated in this same interview that if Municipal District Councils were not successful in gaining greater budgetary control for their Districts, he would try to establish a separate Canton for Nosara and other surrounding coastal communities. He admitted, however, that this would be a much more difficult process.<sup>46</sup>

The Minister of Decentralization for Costa Rica, D. Juan Marín in the same article, explained that being designated either a District Council or a separate Canton would depend greatly on the income generated within the area itself. He explained, “It (any district) must have sufficient income to sustain an administrative structure, takes up 30% of all income. The remaining amount needs to be sufficient to fund public works. To the contrary the District Council would simply be another bureaucratic organization with no additional benefit to the community.” The article states that the budget for any District Council must be around 500 million colones or ~\$1,000,000.00.

There may be some flexibility and/or other factors, which contribute to the decision to grant the establishment of a District Council. Although budget figures for other existing District Councils were unavailable, the proposed budget for 2014 for Monteverde is just over 325 million colones with close to 40% going toward Administrative costs.

In an interview with the President of the Municipal District Council for Monteverde, Maria Elena Corrales emphasized that they are very hopeful that the bill before the legislature will be approved. However, she also pointed out that since Monteverde became its own District in February of 2003, with greater independence from Puntarenas, they have been able to provide many benefits to the local

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<sup>45</sup> Union Nacional de Gobiernos Locales [www.ungl.or.cr](http://www.ungl.or.cr)

<sup>46</sup> *La Voz de Nosara*, Jan. 2013, quoted in the Draft Zoning Plan for Nosara, pg. 430

community including the purchase of large road machinery to maintain and improve the roads-- a problem that is likewise paramount for Nosara.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Maria Elena Corrales, President of the Monteverde Advisory Council

## **V. An Open Letter to the Playas de Nosara Community from the Nosara Civic Association**

The Nosara Civic Association (NCA) needs to evolve in order to address new challenges. In this letter, a brief NCA “history in a nutshell” provides context for an explanation of why the fate of tourism destinations is connected to native (tico) community development, and how NCA must embrace managed growth to secure our paradise for the future.

### **NCA “History In A Nutshell”**

NCA was founded in 1975. At that time NCA had the clear purpose of providing basic services to a small expat community. NCA provided diesel generator power before ICE. NCA built the first private water system in Costa Rica. NCA acquired lands from the original developers, creating extensive greenways throughout Playas de Nosara (Playas de Nosara was formerly called The American Project and refers to the expat development at Guiones and Pelada beaches; Nosara District includes the region around Nosara village that is not primarily expat-settled), re-growing the jungle from pasture land, and providing a natural setting for residents and a few supporting businesses. Managing tourism development was never an NCA objective. Playas de Nosara was too remote and too rustic for conventional tourism. The NCA Mission Statement, unchanged since 1975, states:

“The mission of NCA is to preserve the total environment of the Beaches of Nosara by protecting against improper use of its assets, careless pollution and irresponsible development.”

Further,

“The NCA promotes an understanding of the environment and careful community development through advocacy, conflict resolution, and the dissemination of information balanced with due consideration to the rights of its associates.”

Among its many other accomplishments, ten years ago NCA conducted a highly successful campaign to prevent a massive development at Guiones beach. While for many years a love of freedom and adventure was reflected in Nosara’s first expat pioneers, beginning in about 2002, so was a love of private property. As land parcels increased in value by 10 or 20 times their original cost, regulated boundary lines and the enforcement of property rights became of greater interest. Indeed, balancing freedom and adventure with the protection of community character has been the NCA’s biggest challenge in recent years.

Today, Playas de Nosara has grown significantly with vacationing visitors (my blue sky estimate is 50,000, annually) far outnumbering residents (estimated at 4900 for the Nosara District; in Playas de Nosara, highly variable). The needs of Playas de Nosara have morphed into those that seem to appear in every resort community. In response, the NCA must acquire new capabilities and resources so that it

may evolve into a modern non-profit organization capable of addressing the growing needs of our community.

While protecting the maritime zone and the beaches has been and will always be the primary mission of the organization, the additional day-to-day realities that impact our quality of life must either be properly addressed or deliberately ignored. Either way, the “consent of the governed,” in this case, NCA members, must be carefully considered. Too many rules, and the community could become overregulated and changed into something it has never been and never wants to be. Too few rules, and chaos ensues. The NCA must also address what history reveals, which is that in places where protective governmental institutions are weak, irresponsible players abuse their economic freedom in ways that harm both residents and visitors. Such is our situation in Playas de Nosara.

### **Poverty in Costa Rica**

For 50 years from 1948-98, the United States provided Costa Rica with more than \$2 billion in economic aid. Most of the aid (\$1.4B) was received between 1982–92 when civil war raged in Central America and Ronald Reagan and George Bush were in the White House. Over this period ticos began to live longer and healthier lives, became better educated, enjoyed higher incomes and lived in a progressive democratic country while their neighbors—north and south— experienced civil war, revolution and extreme poverty. While the U.S. government helped, the changes were the result of Costa Rican citizens and their government acting in their own interests.

In fact, by 2012 Costa Rica had replaced Chile as the country with the highest level of “democratic development” in Latin America, according to the 2012 Latin American Democratic Development Index.

Further, ever since the Costa Rican presidential election campaign of 2006, corruption has been identified and punished at the national level. This was followed by a Constitutional amendment ordering a transfer of 10% of the country’s finances to the municipalities accompanied by a decentralization of responsibilities. Some statistics remain sketchy, but why does poverty in Costa Rica remain intractable?

The answer is that in practice, only about 3.5% of Costa Rica’s finances have been transferred to municipalities, owing to deep-rooted institutional rigidities and corruption at the county level. According to a country report by the European Commission, this was despite the fact that most political parties voice the belief that changes must be made in the way power is distributed in Costa Rica and that responsibilities and accountability be delegated to municipalities.

### **Why Tico Community Development Matters**

An estimated 21% per cent of Costa Ricans live in poverty while in the District of Nosara the estimate of families living in poverty is close to the national average.

As foreigners, the members of NCA and all of the affiliated organizations and committees did not create and generally have not promulgated these conditions for poverty. Indeed, education, employment and quality of life have improved in many measurable ways with the advent of expat residential development and tourism, slowly improving over the past four decades. The level of caring, social

responsibility and civic engagement among members of our community has been extraordinary and in many ways a model for coastal tourism in Central America.

Nevertheless, significant problems persist, and they impact the sustainability of the Playas de Nosara community as a tourism/residential paradise in a number of ways:

1. Nosara's lack of adequate law enforcement results in higher property crime rates.
2. Nosara's lack of a regulatory plan leads to inappropriate land uses.
3. Inadequate coordination among social services, water, waste management and other basic services result in inferior public amenities.
4. Lack of mental health services for the tico community leads to endemic depression, alcoholism/drug addiction, and trauma-related disorders – reducing employability and ensuring the continuation of multi-generational poverty.
5. As the economy changes from agriculture to tourism, the tico community struggles with an antiquated educational system producing young people unqualified for the new economy.
6. Without job-specific skills and language training, many jobs are filled by imported workers, sending their wages home and creating “leakage” from our local economy.
7. Poverty is visible. Impoverished people living in windowless shacks surrounded by dirty kids and starving dogs are important factors for tourists seeking a pleasant visitor experience.
8. The stress of poverty increases domestic violence, (both spousal and child abuse).
9. The gap between rich and poor is a concern both for us and nearly everywhere else in the world.
10. Without the tico community in the same corner as the NCA, the NCA's attempts to reform government administration and regulation will be muted, but working together will provide legitimacy to tico/gringo efforts that will vastly increase the chances for success.

### **Fact-based Planning**

As NCA begins to frame a managed growth strategy, reliable data is essential for good planning. Statistical research by the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) has provided much-needed information to help guide our way. The government statistics CREST has uncovered indicate that while the beach areas have grown, the village of Nosara struggles to provide basic needed services to its residents. Education, health, child welfare, and senior services are sorely lacking. Too many skilled workers are recruited from out-of-town to supplement skill gaps in our local workforce. There are too few training opportunities for both construction trades and service workers, and wholly inadequate practical language instruction for local residents to compete for many hospitality jobs or small business opportunities. For all of the reasons listed above, without a robust Nosara village reaping the rewards of a changing economy, the Playas de Nosara will deteriorate, as has happened in so many of the world's beautiful places.

### **The Role of the Nosara Civic Association**

The NCA role in the community must now reflect these new challenges. It is no longer possible to separate Playas de Nosara from the realities of our neighbors in Nosara District and the surrounding area. We can and must do better. We must work hard to improve communication and coordination both among ourselves and with village organizations. Most importantly we must work closely with the Asociación De Desarrollo Integral De Nosara (ADIN), the tico officials elected to represent the Nosara tico community. In both growth management and community development, NCA relationships must

deepen and expand, including ADIN, the Nicoya municipality, MINAE and ICT and organizations such as CRUSA and Friends of Costa Rica. We must also reach out to regulatory agencies at the national level, in San Jose.

At the same time that our expat and tico organizations are working together to promote local development, they must also focus together on avoiding undesirable growth. Rapid and high-density development ahead of infrastructure expansion leads quickly to degradation of the environment, decline in business revenues and quality of life. If Playas de Nosara wants nightlife, it will need a place for it to exist away from residential areas. Without some zoning standard, growth creates chaos and a diminishment of high value tourism.

Young and old, working or playing, visitor or resident, fulltime, part time, some-time and one-time Nosara experiences must be considered. There are important choices to make relating to roads, water, waste management, law enforcement, development regulations, and permitting. Further, there needs to be a mechanism to pay for a regulatory framework, whether voluntary or mandated.

As priorities, managing growth and community development must be addressed both dynamically and with a new set of priorities and long range goals. These efforts will require revisions in NCA's mission, reach, governance and strategies that generate the means for advancement. The following outlines a threshold strategy for moving forward:

### **NCA Purposes**

Steady growth and visitor counts over the past decade and the expectations of convenience, comfort and affordability led to the building of Daniel Oduber Quiros International Airport at Liberia and the opening of more than 100 mass tourism inclusive resorts in Guanacaste, all leading to an entirely new set of circumstances for Playas de Nosara and NCA.

Now at a crossroads, the Playas de Nosara community must determine its long-term vision that will inform a strategy and plan for the future. In similar situations across the world—guided by international organizations like the UN Development Programme, Inter-America Development Bank, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and others—the process of planning for sustainability has been tested and refined over the past several years. An NCA planning process may embrace:

- The recently established Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations, a good place to begin to frame the issues.
- The establishment of four NCA working groups including Growth Management, Community Development, NCA Governance and NCA Advancement.
- Introduction of the need for goals and planning to the NCA General Assembly.
- Continued proactive protection of the Ostional Wildlife Refuge Maritime Zone and the environmental integrity of the open space in our community.
- Recognition of an expanded NCA service area to include adjacent communities that identify with the Nosara place-identity and use Nosara services.

## Priority Projects

As the missions of NCA working groups indicate, sensible land use and managed growth are top priorities for Playas de Nosara development. Of equal significance is the recognition of the importance of expat/tico partnerships to improve the regional economy and open opportunities for local citizens. In both matters, broad participation and support, consensus building and a balancing of residential and business interests are paramount.

## A Call to Action

The challenges are formidable. Normalization of land uses, the sanctity of land tenure and the policing of illegal development are critical. Without regulatory powers, NCA cannot fight these battles and without an expat/tico partnership there is little hope for governmental action. While Costa Rica has earned an enviable record for responsible tourism, its vision for ecotourism and measured growth has eroded.

Resident and citizen involvement are the keys to positive change. Civic virtue has tremendous rewards. A lack of civic engagement has serious consequences. As a resident, becoming an NCA member is the first step in the process. Volunteering to join one of NCA's committees is the next. Communication is critical. Paying a liveable wage to employees, supporting our many volunteer organizations and participating in the debate over development controls is essential. Together, we can empower our community so that it thrives and endures. Without your help we will lose control over our destiny.

Join NCA today for a better tomorrow.

Alvin Rosenbaum, President  
Nosara Civic Association  
January 21, 2014

**Appendix: 1 – Budgeted vs. Implemented Projects for Nicoya & Nosara**

**NICOYA & NOSARA - Number of Projects – Budget Allocated for Projects – Projects Implemented – Jan. /Dec. 2012**

Nicoya				Nosara				
# of Projects Budgeted	# of Projects Executed in full or partially	Budgeted	Implemented	# Projects Budgeted	# of Projects Executed in full or partially	Budgeted Projects	Implemented Projects	Description of Projects
<b>Colones</b>				<b>Colones</b>				
1	1	3,640,000	3,328,000	1	1	2,310,000	1,751,500	Road Maintenance
1	1	5,460,000	4,992,000	1	1	2,870,000	2,316,500	Road Maintenance
1	1	15,000,000	4,420,000	1	1	2,800,000	1,977,500	Road Maintenance
1	1	20,000,000	19,483,360	1	1	910,000	678,000	Road Maintenance
1		4,000,000	4,000,000	1	1	805,000	565,000	Road Maintenance
1	1	5,250,000	5,232,000	1	1	1,540,000	847,500	Road Maintenance
1	1	13,600,000	13,505,624	1	1	10,000,000	9,998,350	Drainage System - Ostional to Nosara
1	1	17,000,000	16,847,500	1		15,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Widening Road - Zaragoza to Nosara
1	1	9,500,000	7,915,000	1		10,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Drainage System - Zaragoza to Nosara
1	1	9,125,000	9,066,000	1	1	2,000,000	1,262,682	Bridge Rio Nosara Drainage - Partially completed (or under budget)
1	1	5,000,000	2,925,926	1	1	2,990,000	2,989,910	Drainage System - Santa Marta - Los Angeles
1	1	8,000,000	8,101,250	1	1	2,170,000	2,170,000	Road Maintenance
1		5,000,000		1		10,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Improvement to the Senior Citizens Home - Nosara
1		2,350,000	<b>0.00</b>	1		3,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Improvement to Health Center - Garza
1		6,000,00	<b>0.00</b>	1		3,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Improvements to Community Center - Garza
1	1	350,000,000	59,999,377	1		2,148,627	<b>0.00</b>	Improvement to Multipurpose Center School Santa Marta



1	1	60,000,000	39,805,331	1	3,836,110	₱0.00	Purchase of 2 motorcycles for the Police Force - Nosara
1		25,200,000	0.00	1	3,836,111	₱0.00	Purchase & install 98 ceiling fans for Nosara School District
1	1	18,000,000	17,989,500	1	1,645,694	₱0.00	Netting around the Soccer Field Santa Lucia
1	1	8,719,316	8,719,316				
1		1,079,200			<b>Total</b>	80,861,542	₱24,556,94
1		1,440,000	0.00				
1	1	2,728,701	2,728,680				
1		2,467,865					
1	1	3,000,000	1,296,119				
1		3,000,000	0.00				
1	1	2,000,000	1,416,411				
1		1,429,244	₱				
1	1	2,056,062	₱ 1,324,280				
1		2,000,000	₱				
1		3,000,000	₱				
1		3,000,000	₱				
1		₱	₱				
1		2,003,733	₱				
1		6,400,000	₱				
1		2,000,000	₱				
1		3,000,000.0					
1		0	₱				
1	1	5,000,000	3,062,758				
1		3,000,000	₱				
1		2,000,000	₱				
1		980,000	₱				
1		8,927,494	₱				
1		2,712,437	₱				
<b>Total</b>		664,069,052	232,158,432				
42	20			19	10		

**NICOYA & NOSARA - Number of Projects – Budget Allocated for Projects – Projects Implemented – Jan. /Dec. 2011**

# of Projects	Nicoya			Nosara			Project Description	
	# of Projects Executed in	Budgeted	Implemented	#Projects Budgeted	# of Projects	Budgeted		Implemented
	<b>Colones</b>			<b>Colones</b>				
1	35,058,626		<b>0.00</b>	1	1	1,398,000	1,398,000	Road Improvement - Plaza Nosara- Sta Teresita
1	6,177,000	6,177,000		1	1	2,650,000	2,597,000	Road Improvement - Esperanza Sur to La Ligia
1	1,800,000	1,485,000		1	1	1,872,500	1,835,050	Road Improvement Garza to Delicias
1	16,000,000	13,196,700		1		1,658,500	1,625,330	Road Improvement- Ostional - Los Angeles
1	12,000,000	9,900,000		1		642,000	629,160	Road Maintenance
1	11,700,000	9,652,500		1		4,700,000	4,027,500	Road Maintenance
1	12,000,000	9,900,000		1		3,150,000	2,340,000	Road Maintenance
1	27,125,000	27,125,000		1		1,000,000	756,900	Road Maintenance
1	11,000,000	8,974,340		1		2,800,000	2,379,750	Road Maintenance
1	8,000,000	3,126,000		1		5,138,400	5,138,400.	Intersection Ostional – Plz. Nosara - Sewer System & Drainage
1	9,000,000	6,100,000		1		5,800,000	5,797,000	Drainage Intersection Ostional to Plz. Nosara
1	5,250,000	5,250,000					2,170,000	Road Maintenance
1	2,000,000	1,960,000		1		10,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Drainage Zaragoza - Nosara
1	12,000,000	11,452,500		1		2,148,626	1,432,550	Improvements to Nosara School - Partially implemented
1	20,000,000	18,999,590		1		2,500,000	2,048,940	Construction of English Classroom - Nosara School
1	13,600,000		<b>0.00</b>	1		3,000,000	<b>0.00</b>	Improvements to Health Center - Garza; Not Implemented

1	9,000,000	9,000,000	1	3,000,000	0.00	Improvements to Community Center - Garza - Not Implemented
1	17,000,000	0.00	1	2,148,627	0.00	Improvements to the School in Santa Marta - Not Implemented
1	10,000,000	0.00	1	2,711,919	2,664,300	Purchase & installation of submersible water pumps - NotCompleted
1	9,500,000	0.00				
1	13,000,000	13,000,000		58,467,199	36,839,880	<b>Total</b>
1	5,000,000	0.00				
1	20,000,000	0.00			30,694,090	Road Maintenance total
1	350,000,000	0.00			6,145,790	Other
1	3,000,000	2,996,198				
1	2,000,000	0.00				
1	80,000,000	79,999,900				
1	4,293,477	1,704,739				
1	8,719,316					
1	166,960					
1	13,842,257	13,842,257				
1	2,776,208	1,954,393				
1	3,000,000					
1	3,000,000					
1	2,511,207					
1	2,467,865					
1	3,000,000	-				
1	5,000,000	4,800,000				
1	2,000,000	-				
1	1,355,917					
1	2,056,062					
1	3,000,000	-				
1	3,000,000	-				
1	3,000,000	-				
1	15,000,000	3,155,950				
1	3,000,000	3,000,000				
46	802,399,895	276,752,067	19			

**NICOYA & NOSARA - Number of Projects – Budget Allocated for Projects – Projects Implemented – Jan. /Dec. 2010**

Nicoya	Presupuestado	Ejecutado	Nosara	Presupuestado	Ejecutado
	Colones			Colones	
1	120,000,000	0.00	1	3,200,000.00	0.00
1	8,000,000	7,452,000.00	1	4,600,000.00	0.00
1	12,000,000	0.00	1	2,600,000.00	0.00
1	100,648,450	90,338,450.00	1	3,000,000.00	2,193,500.00
1	6177000	0.00	1	2,500,000.00	0.00
1	69,462,000	69,462,000.00	1	850,000.00	0.00
1	1,800,000	0.00	1	4,000,000.00	535,000.00
1	30,000,000	0.00	1	10,000,000.00	0.00
1	16,000,000	0.00	1	3,000,000.00	0.00
1	12,000,000	0.00	1	9,203,000.00	0.00
1	11,700,000	0.00	1	7,590,000.00	0.00
1	12,000,000	0.00	1	3,150,000.00	0.00
1	5,250,000	0.00	1	1,000,000.00	0.00
1	5,275,000	0.00	1	2,148,626.00	0.00
1	80,000,000	0.00	1	2,148,627.00	0.00
1	13,842,257.00	0.00	1	2,148,627.00	0.00
1	4,100,270.00	0.00	1	10,000,000.00	0.00
1	2,511,207.00	0.00	1	6,047,180.00	3,335,260.00
1	2,467,865.00	0.00			
1	2,776,208.00	0.00			
1	3,000,000.00	0.00			
1	2,000,000.00	0.00			
1	3,000,000.00	0.00			
1	5,000,000.00	0.00			
1	2,000,000.00	0.00			
1	15,000,000.00	0.00			
1	8,719,316.00	0.00			
1	1,762,222.00	0.00			
1	2,056,062.00	0.00			
1	3,129,763.00	0.00			
1	3,000,000.00	0.00			
1	5,000,000.00	0.00			

**NICOYA & NOSARA - Number of Projects – Budget Allocated for Projects – Projects Implemented – Jan. /Dec. 2009**

Colones			Colones		
Nicoya	Presupuestado	Ejecutado	Nosara	Presupuestado	Ejecutado
1	3,000,000.00	2,922,990.00	1	1,510,000.00	1,212,045.00
1	1,895,437.00	1,596,270.00	1	3,000,000.00	0.00
1	1,511,471.00	1,102,825.00	1	2,045,000.00	2,045,000.00
1	2,125,000.00	1,912,650.00	1	3,110,000.00	3,110,000.00
1	2,500,000.00	2,499,913.00	1	2,165,000.00	2,165,000.00
1	5,000,000.00	4,177,680.00	1	942,000.00	942,000.00
1	6,000,000.00	5,902,307.00	1	880,000.00	880,000.00
1	16,000,000.00	10,340,998.00	1	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00
1	1,860,040.00	0.00	1	950,000.00	950,000.00
1	26,000,000.00	20,729,131.00	1	6,703,000.00	0.00
1	886,340.00	737,651.00	1	7,000,000.00	0.00
1	6,950,000.00	6,906,250.00			
1	23,500,000.00	22,943,324.00			
1	11,100,000.00	10,942,708.00			
1	29,920,000.00	27,281,110.00			
1	4,000,000.00	3,842,174.00			
1	70,500,000.00	0.00			
1	1,500,000.00	0.00			
1	20,000,000.00	18,800,000.00			
1	3,000,000.00	3,000,000.00			
1	5,500,000.00	5,500,000.00			
1	23,341,125.00	19,662,908.00			
1	2,000,000.00	1,799,999.00			
1	6,876,480.00	5,246,680.00			
1	80,000,000.00	0.00			
1	10,000,000.00	10,000,000.00			
1	13,842,257.00	0.00			
1	8,863,651.00	0.00			
1	42,000,000.00	42,000,000.00			

## **Appendix 2: Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D)**

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations, released in November 2013, are an effort to come to a common understanding of sustainable destinations, and are the minimum undertakings that any tourism management organization that wishes to be sustainable should aspire to reach. To satisfy the definition of sustainable tourism, destinations must take an interdisciplinary, holistic and integrative approach, which includes four main objectives: to (i) demonstrate sustainable destination management; (ii) maximize social and economic benefits for the host community and minimize negative impacts; (iii) maximize benefits to communities, visitors and cultural heritage and minimize impacts; and (iv) maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts. The criteria are designed to be used by all types and scales of destinations.

The criteria are part of the response of the tourism community to the global challenges of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Poverty alleviation, gender equity and environmental sustainability, including climate change, are the main cross-cutting issues that are addressed through the criteria.

The criteria and indicators were developed based on already recognized criteria and approaches including, for example, the UNWTO destination level indicators, GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators, and other widely accepted principles and guidelines, certification criteria and indicators. They reflect certification standards, indicators, criteria, and best practices from different cultural and geo-political contexts around the world in tourism and other sectors where applicable. Potential indicators were screened for relevance and practicality, as well as their applicability to a broad range of destination types.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are administered by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The criteria indicate what should be done, not how to do it or whether the goal has been achieved. This role is fulfilled by performance indicators, associated educational materials, and access to tools for implementation from public, NGO and private sector providers all of which are an indispensable complement to the Destination Level Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations were conceived as the beginning of a process to make sustainability the standard practice in all forms of tourism.

### **Application**

It is recommended that all criteria be applied to the greatest extent practical, unless for a specific situation the criterion is not applicable and justification is provided. There may be circumstances in which a criterion is not applicable to a specific tourism destination or destination management

organization, given the local regulatory, environmental, social, economic or cultural conditions. In the case of smaller destinations and communities, it is recognized that limited resources may prevent comprehensive application of all criteria.

Because destinations are comprised by many different enterprises, organizations and individuals, the application of these criteria should include thorough consideration of the cumulative effects of activities. Measurement at the destination scale will usually capture the net result of cumulative effects at the individual scale. However monitoring of impacts is not an end in itself; it should be viewed as a tool for improving the sustainability of the destination.

Further guidance on these criteria may be found from the supporting indicators and glossary, which will be published by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

<b>Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations</b>	
<b>SECTION A: Demonstrate sustainable destination management</b>	
<b>A1 Sustainable destination strategy</b>	The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety, and aesthetic issues, and was developed with public participation.
<b>A2 Destination management organization</b>	The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group is suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group’s activities are appropriately funded.
<b>A3 Monitoring</b>	The destination has a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues. The monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically.
<b>A4 Tourism seasonality management</b>	The destination dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment, to identify year-round tourism opportunities.
<b>A5 Climate change adaptation</b>	The destination has a system to identify risks and opportunities associated with climate change. This system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development, siting, design, and management of facilities. The system contributes to the sustainability and resilience of the destination and to public education on climate for both residents and tourists.

## Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

### **A6 Inventory of tourism assets and attractions**

The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions, including natural and cultural sites.

### **A7 Planning Regulations**

The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that require environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are designed to protect natural and cultural resources, were created with local inputs from the public and a thorough review process, are publicly communicated, and are enforced.

### **A8 Access for all**

Where appropriate, sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements. Where such sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved.

### **A9 Property acquisitions**

Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist, are enforced, comply with communal and indigenous rights, ensure public consultation, and do not authorize resettlement without prior informed consent and/or reasonable compensation.

### **A10 Visitor satisfaction**

The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction, and, if necessary, to take action to improve visitor satisfaction.

### **A11 Sustainability standards**

The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards for enterprises consistent with the GSTC Criteria. The destination makes publicly available a list of sustainability certified or verified enterprises.

### **A12 Safety and security**

The destination has a system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards.

### **A13 Crisis and emergency management**

The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises. The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents, and is updated on a regular basis.



## Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

### **A14 Promotion**

Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and sustainability claims. The promotional messages treat local communities and tourists authentically and respectfully.

## ***SECTION B: Maximize economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts***

### **B1 Economic monitoring**

The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported at least annually. To the extent feasible, this should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment and investment data.

### **B2 Local career opportunities**

The destination's enterprises provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.

### **B3 Public participation**

The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.

### **B4 Local community opinion**

Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are regularly monitored, recorded and publicly reported in a timely manner.

### **B5 Local access**

The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.

### **B6 Tourism awareness and education**

The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism, and the importance of sustainability.

### **B7 Preventing exploitation**

The destination has laws and established practices to prevent commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly of children, adolescents, women, and minorities. The laws and established practices are publicly communicated.

### **B8 Support for community**

The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives.

## Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

### **B9 Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade**

The destination has a system that supports local and small- and medium-sized enterprises, and promotes and develops local sustainable products and fair trade principles that are based on the area's nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.

## ***SECTION C: Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts***

### **C1 Attraction protection**

The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.

### **C2 Visitor management**

The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.

### **C3 Visitor behavior**

The destination has published and provided guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive sites. Such guidelines are designed to minimize adverse impacts on sensitive sites and strengthen positive visitor behaviors.

### **C4 Cultural heritage protection**

The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artifacts.

### **C5 Site interpretation**

Accurate interpretive information is provided at natural and cultural sites. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with community collaboration, and communicated in languages pertinent to visitors.

### **C6 Intellectual property**

The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.

## ***SECTION D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts***

### **D1 Environmental risks**

The destination has identified environmental risks and has a system in place to address them.

### **D2 Protection of sensitive environments**

The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism, conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems, and prevent the introduction of invasive species.

## Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

### **D3 Wildlife protection**

The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for the harvest or capture, display, and sale of wildlife (including plants and animals).

### **D4 Greenhouse gas emissions**

The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, minimize, publicly report, and mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).

### **D5 Energy conservation**

The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report energy consumption, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

### **D6 Water Management**

The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report water usage.

### **D7 Water security**

The destination has a system to monitor its water resources to ensure that use by enterprises is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.

### **D8 Water quality**

The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.

### **D9 Wastewater**

The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems, and ensures wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely with minimal adverse effects to the local population and the environment.

### **D10 Solid waste reduction**

The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.

### **D11 Light and noise pollution**

The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution. The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.

### **D12 Low-impact transportation**

The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transportation, including public transportation and active transportation (e.g., walking and cycling).

## Appendix 3: Nosara Volunteer Service Organizations

Several of these organizations began as part of and receive support from NCA.

**Friends of Nosara** is a non-profit organization that acts as a community foundation to provide a way for donors to provide tax-exempt contributions to these Nosara volunteer organizations:

**The Community Center Fund of the Development Association of Nosara** seeks to purchase land and materials to construct a community center for Nosara.

**Cruz Roja (the Nosara Red Cross)** provides both first aid and critical emergency transportation to residents and visitors alike.

**The Del Mar Academy** is a privately funded school that provides a high-quality bilingual education in a nurturing and richly stimulating setting. One of its prime focuses is increasing student awareness and knowledge of environmental issues and challenges. The **Del Mar Academy's Scholarship Fund** strives to make this extraordinary school experience available to children who otherwise would be unable to attend.

**Escuelita de Nosara aka Escuelita de Verano** provides a vacation day camp for the children of Nosara whose public school holiday runs through the month of January. The Escuelita's mission is to inspire creativity and invoke passion for higher learning and development through the implementation of a diverse arts program. Through the demonstration of alternative ways of thinking, acting, living and believing it is hoped that bridges will be formed allowing and ultimately improving the future of the community. The program started with 7 children and has grown to over 200.

**FUCAN** is our local trade school. It works with and through the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA) to provide technical training to all Nosareños.

**Nosara Animal Welfare Association aka Nosara Animal Care** provides no cost health care for homeless animals and for animals living with low-income families who cannot afford the high costs of veterinary medicine. Their belief is that every animal equally deserves quality care from skilled and gentle veterinarians. They also have an adoption program to help find homes for rehabilitated street animals and for unwanted litters of puppies and kittens.

**Nosara Civic Association's Beach and Refuge Protection Fund** protects the wildlife refuge abutting the beaches of Nosara and the NCA Parklands. Primarily through the efforts of this organization our beaches have remained undeveloped, protecting the nesting grounds of the Olive Ridley turtle.

**Costas Verdes**, works through education and community involvement and has planted thousands of trees on Playa Guiones as well as other beaches throughout the country. Their **Barrio Guiones** beach eco-system restoration and reforestation project is also supported under the NCA's Beach Fund.

**Nosara Recycling Association** (Asociación de Desechos y Reciclaje de Nosara) was formed in response to the degradation of our immediate environment and natural resources. Its mission is to educate, promote and advance environmentally and economically sound waste management practices in Nosara and the surrounding communities. ADRN is currently working on the planning, fundraising and construction for a Solid Waste Recovery Center in coordination with the government, a group of professors and students of engineering and architecture from the New York Institute of Technology, and local active organizations.

**Nosara Wildlife Rescue** is a joint effort of **Refugio Animales de Nosara** and **SIBU Sanctuary** who share a common mission: to rescue injured, orphaned, and displaced wild animals and provide them immediate medical care, rehabilitation, and eventual release into the wild. Nosara Wildlife Rescue has been instrumental in insulating power lines to protect our howler monkeys - an ongoing, costly and extensive project with much more to accomplish.

**The Public Schools of Nosara, Santa Marta and Esperanza** have limited funds and need everything from pencils and desks to roofing. NCA works with the parent-teacher associations of the elementary and high schools to improve the facilities and expand resources for the schools.

**The Surfing Nosara Foundation** concentrates on completing one project at a time that will benefit the children of Nosara. They are currently focused on helping the area's public schools.

**CRUSA Foundation's Guanacaste Community Fund** is building a bridge between people and organizations interested in contributing to Guanacaste's sustainable development and local communities confronting the region's serious social and environmental problems.

In addition,

**Playas de Nosara ASADA** is the community's water system and the **De La Asociacion De Seguridad Comunitaria De Nosara** (Nosara Security Association\_Nosara\_www.nosarawatch.com) provides security and firefighting services. **Nosara Food Bank**, created By NCA And ADIN, partners with Pastoral Sociale of the Catholic Church of Nosara to provide emergency food and necessities for needy families.