

SIFT Sunday presentation script



Slide 1: SIFT works with the poor of Nicaragua, Central America.

Slide 2: SIFT's projects take place in Bluefields, on the island of Ometepe and near the cities of Managua and Granada.

Slide 3: Nicaragua is about the same size as England but only has a population of six million people. During the 20th century the country suffered from a dictatorship and a civil war, which has affected its economic development. It also suffers from hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes and volcanoes. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Americas - 39% of the population live below the poverty line, on less than £2 per day, and 7.6% live in extreme poverty.

Slide 4: SIFT's work started when a child asked for financial help so that they could go to school. The work has grown and now SIFT supports 140 children and young people at school and university in the town of Bluefields. Government-run schools in Nicaragua are free, however they are under-resourced and don't have a high standard of teaching; SIFT pays for their sponsored students to attend private schools. All of these schools are run by churches, so the children also receive a Christian education.

Slide 5: Margaret Storey, a volunteer from the UK, lives in Bluefields for 8 months a year. She makes monthly checks that the students are attending school and gives pastoral and practical support to them and their families. SIFT would really struggle without her!

Slide 6: Jose is one of SIFT's best students. Despite having a father who is an alcoholic and a mother who is often ill due to diabetes, he completed school as an honours student and is now studying business and tourism at university. He also has a job teaching at a small primary school. In the evenings he teaches adults who were not able to complete their schooling when they were children.

Slide 7: The Hogar de Fe (Home of Faith) Orphanage was started by Pastor Ramiro (right in picture) and Conchita Blandón when a baby was left on their doorstep. The orphanage is now run by their son, Isaac (left in picture), and Ramiro oversees the whole work, which includes the orphanage, a school, and a church. SIFT supports the orphanage through a child sponsorship scheme.

Slide 8: The Orphanage provides a safe and loving Christian home for up to 50 children and young people. The children receive counselling from a trained psychologist as they come from troubled backgrounds. They also have extra educational opportunities in the form of English, IT and music lessons.

Slide 9: Each January the orphanage team hold a health fair for members of the local community. Medical professionals volunteer their time, giving dental and medical check-ups. The children receive bags of school supplies ready for the new school year which starts in February. Members of Ramiro's church are available to talk to people and this year 40 people became Christians at the health fair.

Slide 10: Granada is the oldest colonial town in Nicaragua and it attracts a lot of tourists. Unfortunately the influx of tourists also makes Granada a centre for the sex trade. Children and young people are particularly at risk and sometimes girls are forced into prostitution by their families or to support themselves.

Slide 11: In response to this problem Valeria Lopez (right) started a centre for young women who have been or are at risk of being involved in the sex trade. She called it Casa Rahab, or Rahab's House. The girls who attend Casa Rahab have been referred there by the police or local authorities. Valeria works at Casa Rahab with Natalia (left), Teresa (centre left) and Gabriela (centre right).

Slide 12: The centre provides each young woman with a programme of counselling and therapy to help them recover from what they have experienced. The team also teach them life skills and help them to finish their schooling. SIFT supports the ministry of Casa Rahab by funding the salaries of Natalia, the sewing teacher, and Gabriela, one of the psychologists.

Slide 13: A few miles away from Granada, in the north-western corner of Lake Nicaragua, lies the Asese peninsula, which is surrounded by 360 little islands. Many of these islands are home to poor families. The families have lived there for generations, but they have no legal rights to their islands.

Slide 14: As the Asese peninsula is in an idyllic location, some rich people have begun buying the islands and building holiday homes or eco-tourist facilities on them.

Slide 15: Families such as Gloria's (back row, second from left) are now facing an uncertain future, fearing that they might be evicted at short notice and with only minimal compensation. SIFT has bought 37 acres of land, called Finca El Rayo, on the Asese peninsula to provide a new home for up to 50 families like Gloria's. A few families have already moved onto the land as they were evicted from their islands. The next phase of the project will see the plots of land being allocated to the beneficiary families so that they will each have a portion of land that is legally theirs.

Slide 16: For the remainder of the presentation we're going to be looking at the work SIFT does on the island of Ometepe, which is home to around 35,000 people. Dr Sandra (fourth from right) and SIFT's team of seven nurses run clinics in 3 communities on the island.

Slide 17: They provide consultations for a small, affordable fee (currently around £1.30) which is waived if the patients can't afford it. All of SIFT's team are Christians and so there are often opportunities for them to talk to their patients about Jesus and to pray for them. Nicaraguan society is much more open to the Gospel than the UK and so patients are generally very happy to receive prayer.

Slide 18: All medicines are provided for free. At government clinics you can see the doctor for free but have to pay for your medicines which often means that families can't afford treatment. As well as treating patients SIFT's team provide health education, giving talks to people who are waiting for their appointments.

Slide 19: In Nicaraguan society the elderly can be excluded from village life due to their age. To combat the loneliness this can cause SIFT's nurses run a fortnightly luncheon club for the elderly. This provides them with a hot meal, a chance to build or renew friendships and to hear the gospel. It also gives SIFT's team the chance to monitor the health of these elderly people, who can be reluctant to come to the clinic for a consultation.

Slide 20: The team also run a club for expectant mothers where they teach the mothers about what to expect during pregnancy and how to recognise the signs of common problems they may experience. The women are also taught how to cook nutritious food for their families and are given baby clothes. As they approach their due date, Dr Sandra gives them ultrasound scans, and SIFT's nurses carry out post-natal follow-up home visits to check on the health of mother and baby.

Slide 21: Most families on the island of Ometepe, particularly those who live in rural villages, cook on open wood fires. As a result their kitchens and houses get filled with smoke, which leads to an increased incidence of respiratory disease. SIFT provides families on Ometepe with a different type of cooker which has a chimney to funnel all of the harmful smoke out of the house. It uses less firewood than a traditional stove, which frees up the family's time and resources for other uses.

Slide 22: SIFT also supports a Feeding Programme on the island of Ometepe. This provides between 40 and 50 children with a glass of high-vitamin milk twice a week. The Feeding Programme was started around 20 years ago by a lady called Julita Aleman and continues to be run on her front porch. The sessions are led by a team of local Christians and include action songs and a Bible story. While this is happening there is a Bible study for the mothers, some of whom attended the Feeding Programme when they were children!

Slide 23: You can find out more about SIFT's ministry in Nicaragua by visiting the website or by signing up to receive the SIFT Insight by email or post (three times a year). You can also support SIFT's work by becoming one of our prayer partners. A newsletter containing prayer needs is sent out each month. If you would like to support SIFT financially on a one-off or regular basis that would be greatly appreciated. SIFT also has a number of sponsorship schemes – you could sponsor a child's education in Bluefields, support a child at the Hogar de Fe Orphanage, or sponsor Dr Sandra or one of the nurses on Ometepe. Sponsors receive annual updates to keep them up to date with that particular area of SIFT's work.

Slide 24: Thank you for your support and interest in SIFT. If anyone would like any additional information about SIFT, please come and talk to me at the end.