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On Nicaragua's Economic Crisis

by Deborah Tyroler

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In its Sept. 3 issue, daily newspaper Barricada cited permanent representative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Francesco Vincenti, as saying that he was concerned about social welfare conditions in Nicaragua. He added that the situation will be exacerbated by the return of large numbers of displaced persons and refugees. Health Minister Ernesto Salmeron confirmed Vincenti's assessment by pointing out that an estimated 70% of rural Nicaraguans are victims of "extreme poverty." The majority of affected persons, he said, are children under age 15 and pregnant women. Daily newspaper El Nuevo Diario recently reported that hunger has taken the lives of four residents of villages in northern Nicaragua. The Diario said over 300 persons, including children, are threatened with starvation in the same area. President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro's government and UN representatives recently signed a \$2.7 million cooperation agreement, earmarked for food distribution to 65,000 Nicaraguans, recently returned from Honduras. Vincenti said the aid is insufficient to resolve the current crisis. Presidency Minister Antonio Lacayo told reporters on Aug. 31 that reports delivered two weeks ago by World Bank missions indicated that Nicaragua's economic crisis ranks as the worst in Latin America. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 09/03/90)

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