



Casa Congo

ASTILLERO, NICARAGUA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# WELCOME TO CASA CONGO



Founded in 2017 in El Astillero, Tola, by a team of Italian and Nicaraguan social entrepreneurs with a mission to empower communities for sustainable development.

Casa Congo is a non-profit organization that aims to incubate local community enterprises to drive the socio-economic development and environmental regeneration of the region.

The name Casa Congo comes from the local howler monkey “Congo” that is the symbol of the Chacocente Wild Reserve.

Since its inception, Casa Congo has built and operated a sustainability hub that has provided education to over 250 local students and hosted more than 100 international volunteers.

# OUR PROGRAMS

## 1. Construyendo Sueños

Bamboo Social Housing



## 3. Las Flores

Agroecology & Water Security



## 2. Las Tejedoras

Recycled Plastic Art & Furniture



## 4. Brigada Ecologica

Conservation & Ecotourism



# 1. CONSTRUYENDO SUEÑOS

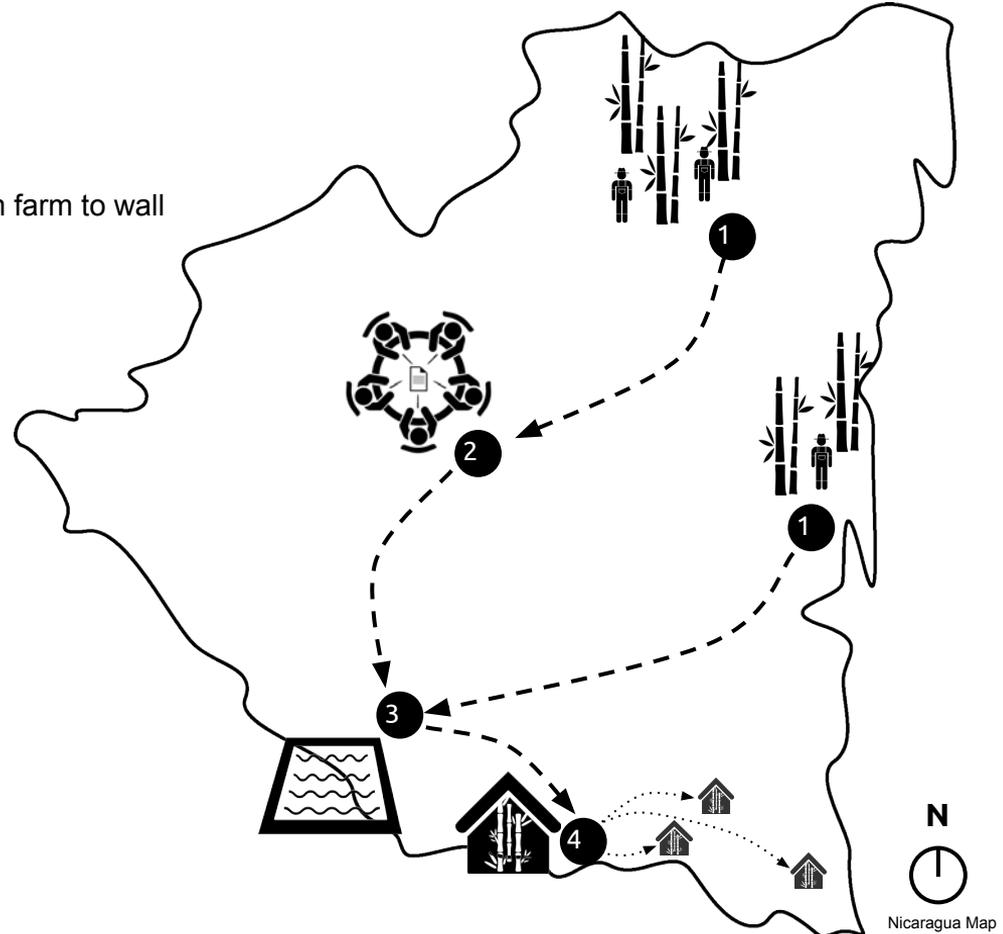
**Nicaragua's first ever bamboo social housing program.**

## **Achievements:**

- Established a community run bamboo supply chain - from farm to wall
- Sequestered 40 tCO<sub>2</sub>
- Improved forestry management of 6 hectares of bamboo
- Built 20 bamboo homes for families who live with \$3/day
- Installed 20 septic tanks and bathrooms
- Built 1 prefab bamboo workshop
- Provided 70 job opportunities for farmers & carpenters
- Trained over 100 community members

## **Key Plan:**

- 1 Matagalpa + Chontales**  
Bambú farms
- 2 Managua**  
ANF / INVUR project management & policy office
- 3 Salinas**  
Community managed bambú treatment centre
- 4 El Astillero**  
Casa Congo school & bambú prefab workshop





# CLICK HERE TO SEE THE ASSEMBLY PROCESS OF A BAMBOO HOUSE



**1. HARVEST BAMBOO FROM FOREST IN CHONTALES**



**2. CUT BAMBOO AND MOVE TO STACKING STATIONS**



**3. TRANSPORT FROM FARM TO TREATMENT CENTRE**



**4. CURE BAMBOO IN NATURAL SALT POOLS**



**5. STORE AND PREFAB PANELS IN WORKSHOP IN EL ASTILLERO**



**6. SHIP PREFAB PANELS TO SITES AROUND THE TOLA AREA**



**7. ASSEMBLE PANELS IN STRUCTURAL FRAMES**



**8. RENDER THE WALLS AND ADD ROOFING / FINISHES**

## 2. LAS TEJEDORAS

### 2007

To protect the local turtles, a collective of 17 women in Nicaragua starts collecting plastic bags and transforming them into new textile products - such as beach bags or key chains.

Since then they are known as Las Tejedoras - The Weavers.

### 2021

Together with Casa Congo, Las Tejedoras launch a rug design made out of 1600 plastic bags and are finalists in RO Guiltless Plastic during Milan Design Week.

### 2022

Casa Congo collaborates with the global design firm Unispace to create a new edition of rugs, designed by different architects from their London, Amsterdam, Paris, Milan and Zurich studios. The rugs have been purchased by corporations to install in their offices as a symbol of their commitment to sustainable development.

So far, the new collection has removed another 22,000 plastic bags from the environment and provided income to 17 families.

### 2023

Another 30 tapestries have been commissioned to Las Tejedoras who are currently in the process of collecting plastic bags to produce the custom products.



# UNA BOLSA MENOS, UNA TORTUGA MÁS!

Collect discarded plastic bags



Every day Las Tejedoras and Casa Congo students collect plastic bags from the beach, the jungle, outside shops and in the streets.

Washing and drying



Once sorted by colour and type, all the bags are carefully washed and sun-dried, to eliminate dirt and saline residues.

Stripping



Once completely dried, the bags are cut into thin strips using scissors.

Making threads



Strips are later intertwined into a 2mm thick strong flexible yarn.

Knitting



The resulting 100% recycled plastic yarn is then knitted together by the expert hands of Las Tejedoras to become a functional and colorful object for everyday use.

# HIGHLIGHTS OF LAS TEJEDORAS SUSTAINABLE CRAFT



Museo Nazionale  
Scienza e Tecnologia  
Leonardo da Vinci  
Via San Vittore 21, Milano

MILANO  
09 DESIGN  
21 WEEK

4/12 september  
10am-8pm

**Ro**  
Rebecca Orlandi

**GUILTLESS  
PLASTIC  
2021**

Save the waste  
WASTE IS VALUE



 internimagazine   
Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnol... 



Liked by nk\_asika and others

internimagazine #InterniDesign

🇮🇹 Nasce dalla raccolta di 1500 sacchetti di plastica trovati sulle spiagge del Nicaragua il tappeto tessuto a mano dalle donne del collettivo Las Tejedoras che grazie alla collaborazione con @casacongoconservation è stato presentato surante



# 3. LAS FLORES

**Las Flores de Nicaragua is a El Astillero based collective of 10 women who design and manage Casa Congo's agroecology and water security program:**

- 15'000 trees planted in Chacocente in collaboration with Brigada Ecologica and volunteers
- 25 agro ecological gardens in El Astillero
- 1 plant nursery + seed bank built
- 390 clean water filters delivered
- 50 rainwater capture tanks installed
- 36 wells restored
- 3 workshops with international experts
- Piloting syntropic agriculture techniques in the Centre of Agroecology

*"People used to laugh at us and tell us we were crazy, now they call Casa Congo the jungle and come asking me for advice and help in their gardens"*  
Anielka Aguirre



# AGROECOLOGY & COMMUNITY



## 4. LA BRIGADA ECOLOGICA



Our conservation efforts in the Chacocente Wild Refuge and ecotours are managed by a team of local students and environmental stewards who participate in Casa Congo's educational programs and gain employment opportunities in the ecotourism sector.

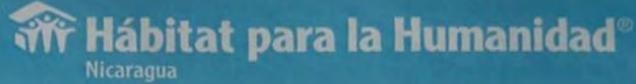
So far, over 100 children have actively taken part in our activities with a key interest in turtle conservation, beach cleanups, surf and nature walks. When international researchers or students come to Nicaragua, the Brigada becomes their support team.

Our best students are awarded scholarships to undertake a degree in ecotourism and environmental sciences at the University of Rivas. Following their degree, they're given employment opportunities as forest rangers, tour guides and other educational or volunteering related activities in the El Astillero area.

# YOUTH ADVOCACY IN ACTION



# PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY NEEDS AT ALL TIMES!



El equipo de Hábitat para la Humanidad  
Nicaragua agradece y reconoce a

**FUNDACIÓN CASA CONGO**

Por su destacada participación y apoyo en respuesta a la  
Emergencia por los Huracanes ETA/IOTA

Marzo, 2021  
Managua, Nicaragua

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Matus-Aguirre".

Frank Matus-Aguirre  
Director de país

*empoderamos con vivienda*



# WHAT'S NEXT FOR CASA CONGO?

Boosting our volunteering programs in Nicaragua  
**Impact Retreats, El Astillero**

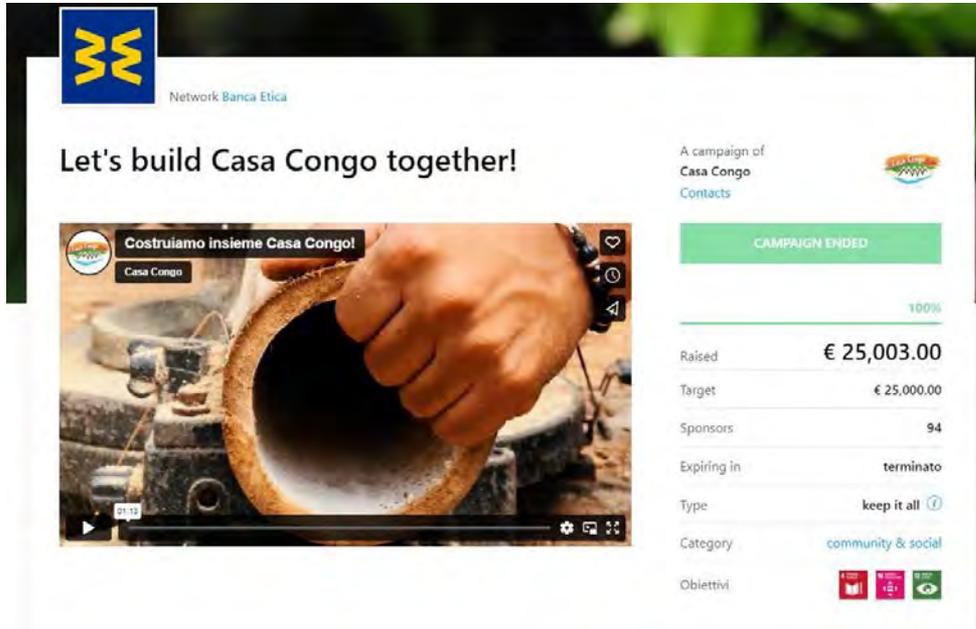


Launching a new bamboo school in Mexico  
**La Morada de los Ancestros, Palenque**



# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

**Donate to our programs!**



The screenshot shows a crowdfunding campaign page for Casa Congo. At the top left is the logo for Network Banca Etica. The main heading reads "Let's build Casa Congo together!". Below this is a video player with the title "Costruiamo insieme Casa Congo!" and a thumbnail showing hands working on a large, circular, earthenware object. To the right of the video player, the campaign details are listed:

- A campaign of Casa Congo
- Contacts
- CAMPAIGN ENDED
- 100%
- Raised: € 25,003.00
- Target: € 25,000.00
- Sponsors: 94
- Expiring in: terminato
- Type: keep it all
- Category: community & social
- Obiettivi: icons for social media and sharing

**Come volunteer with us!**



*Casa Congo welcomes ad-hoc collaborations & corporate partnerships with brands looking to make an impact.*

# VOLUNTEERING HIGHLIGHTS



Over 100 volunteers have come to Casa Congo since 2017. After some quiet years due to covid, Casa Congo is excited to fully reopen its doors in 2023!

Volunteering at Casa Congo is an opportunity to live a unique learning experience, enjoy nature and make an impact with the local community.

Volunteers can either join our regular sustainable development activities or contribute with a specific research project. Past collaborations include internships with universities such as Politecnico di Milano or theses with scientific institutions like Nat Geo.

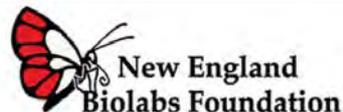
*"As the end of the year is approaching, I want to share my favorite achievement of 2021. Working at and with Casa Congo has been a great and inspiring experience that allowed me to grow from both a personal and professional level"*

- Mattia Bosoni, Urban Environmental Management @ Wageningen University

# MEET THE ALLIES WHO HELP US CHANGE LIVES



wework



Fondazione Ermotti

Ro  
Rosanna Orlandi

PLASTIC PRIZE 2021



**MARENA**  
Ministero del Ambiente  
y los Recursos Naturales



HELP US MAKE A CHANGE!



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