



GAUTENG
LEGISLATURE
Your View — Our Vision

GPL GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS

Batho-Pele

Excellence

Integrity



LEARNING FOR CHANGE

Building a People-First State from Nicaragua's Experience



April in Nicaragua is recognised as a month of peace, symbolising the country's journey from a history of struggle to one of unity, dignity and social progress. It was during this significant period that a delegation from the Gauteng Provincial Legislature (GPL), led by Speaker Morakane Mosupyoe, undertook a benchmarking visit to the Central American nation.

Reflecting on the purpose of the visit, Speaker Mosupyoe emphasised its importance in shaping governance that responds directly to the needs of citizens:

“This visit is not simply about observing another country’s systems, but about understanding how governance can be grounded in the lived realities of the people. Nicaragua demonstrates that when you place people at the centre of development, you begin to see real, measurable change in communities.”

This visit forms part of the GPL's ongoing commitment to strengthening oversight, enhancing cooperative governance, and learning from global best practices that can improve service delivery and the quality of life for the people of Gauteng.

Set against a backdrop of tropical landscapes, vibrant communities and a rich revolutionary history, Nicaragua offers more than policy insights. It presents a lived example of what it means to build a state that places people at the centre of development.

A SHARED HISTORY AND A COMMON PURPOSE

Nicaragua and South Africa share histories shaped by liberation struggles, resistance and the pursuit of justice. This shared experience was evident throughout the visit and reinforced a key principle: governance must serve the dignity and wellbeing of all citizens. For the GPL, whose mandate includes law-making, oversight and promoting public participation, the visit reaffirmed the importance of aligning governance with the lived realities of the people.

AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH: OVERVIEW

Nicaragua's economic model, rooted in agriculture and community-based production, supports local consumption of staple foods while exporting high-value commodities. This balance contributes to the preservation of traditional diets and active lifestyles, which may help limit the spread of lifestyle diseases in some populations, although urbanisation is beginning to shift this pattern.



GPL GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS



HEALTHCARE ROOTED IN COMMUNITY AND ACCESS

Nicaragua's healthcare system stands out as a strong example of a people-centred model. Built on the Family and Community Health Model, it prioritises prevention, accessibility and community participation. Healthcare services are free and universal, supported by mobile clinics, outreach programmes and a network of more than 60,000 community volunteers providing home-based care.

During a visit to the Jacinto Hernández Departmental Hospital in Zelaya Central, the delegation observed a facility comparable to a district hospital in Gauteng. What distinguishes the system is its deep integration with communities. The impact has been significant, including notable reductions in maternal and infant mortality for Nicaragua.

At the same time, both Nicaragua and South Africa continue to face shared challenges such as teenage pregnancy, highlighting the need for strengthened reproductive health education and expanded community-based interventions.

Other notable features include a strong presence of young medical practitioners, reflecting a deliberate investment in building a sustainable and community-oriented healthcare workforce. Equally significant is the recognition of

traditional medicine. Nicaragua has formally integrated traditional healing practices alongside Western medicine within its health system, particularly in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. This inclusive approach ensures that cultural knowledge is respected while broadening access to holistic and contextually relevant healthcare.

Universities along the Caribbean coast provide health education that incorporates ancestral knowledge, ensuring that cultural practices are respected while maintaining access to modern healthcare. This balanced approach resonates strongly with South Africa, where there are ongoing efforts to better integrate traditional healing into formal healthcare systems in a safe and regulated manner.



Key Lessons for Gauteng

- Expanding youth participation in healthcare delivery
- Integrating traditional and modern health practices



EDUCATION AS A DRIVER OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Education in Nicaragua is free and universal from early childhood to tertiary level and is treated as a cornerstone of national development.

The system reflects the lived realities of its people. It incorporates indigenous languages alongside Spanish and promotes cultural identity as part of learning. School nutrition programmes, including daily meals, support improved attendance and learner performance. Technical and vocational education also plays a central role in equipping young people with practical skills that contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Similarly, South Africa's education system embeds cultural identity and historical consciousness within its curriculum, while continuing to expand technical and vocational training pathways to address economic demands.

YOUTH AT THE CENTRE OF DEVELOPMENT

A defining feature of Nicaragua's development approach is the active inclusion of young people. Across sectors such as healthcare, education and community programmes, youth are visibly engaged and contributing to national development.

This intentional inclusion supports lower levels of unemployment and fosters a strong sense of ownership and responsibility among young citizens.

Similarly, the GPL recognises that young people are central to development, democratic participation, and active citizenship in Gauteng. Creating space for youth leadership and meaningful participation will strengthen the GPL's engagement with young people on legislative processes and public initiatives an important strategic outcome of the 7th Administration.





BLUEFIELDS: WHERE CULTURE SPEAKS BEFORE WORDS

Bluefields offered a deeply human experience that extended beyond formal engagements into the heart of community and identity. Located along Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, the city is home to a proud population of Afro-descendants whose cultural presence is both visible and vibrantly expressed.

From the moment of arrival, the warmth of the people was evident. There is an openness in Bluefields that feels intentional, where community is lived rather than spoken about. Conversations flow easily, and there is a genuine pride in sharing identity and heritage. Language reflects this uniqueness. English and Creole are widely spoken, creating a rhythm of interaction that feels both familiar and distinct.

What stands out most is the unapologetic celebration of Afro-Caribbean identity. Through music, storytelling and everyday expression, culture is not simply preserved, it is lived and shared with pride.

Bluefields also reflects strong social cohesion. There is a sense of community care, where people look out for one another and share in both challenges and celebrations. In many ways, Bluefields reminds us that development is not only about infrastructure or systems, but about people, identity and belonging.



ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Nicaragua has made notable progress in surpassing gender parity, with women occupying a substantial number of leadership roles across public institutions, including parliament and government structures.

Women are not only represented but are central to decision-making processes.

Targeted programmes further support women's economic empowerment through access to entrepreneurship funding, small business support and development initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods.

This focus mirrors South Africa's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. The shared experience reinforces the importance of ensuring that women are not only included but actively supported to lead and thrive.



LEÓN: A LIVING HISTORY OF REVOLUTION AND CULTURE

The visit to León provided a deeper cultural perspective on Nicaragua's development. As one of the country's oldest cities, León is widely regarded as its intellectual and political centre. Its streets are lined with murals that reflect the country's revolutionary history, while its architecture tells a story of resilience and transformation. The strong presence of students and young people highlights the link between education, identity and nation-building.



STRENGTHENING COOPERATION FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE

A key outcome of the visit was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Gauteng Provincial Legislature and Nicaragua's National Assembly.

The agreement focuses on:

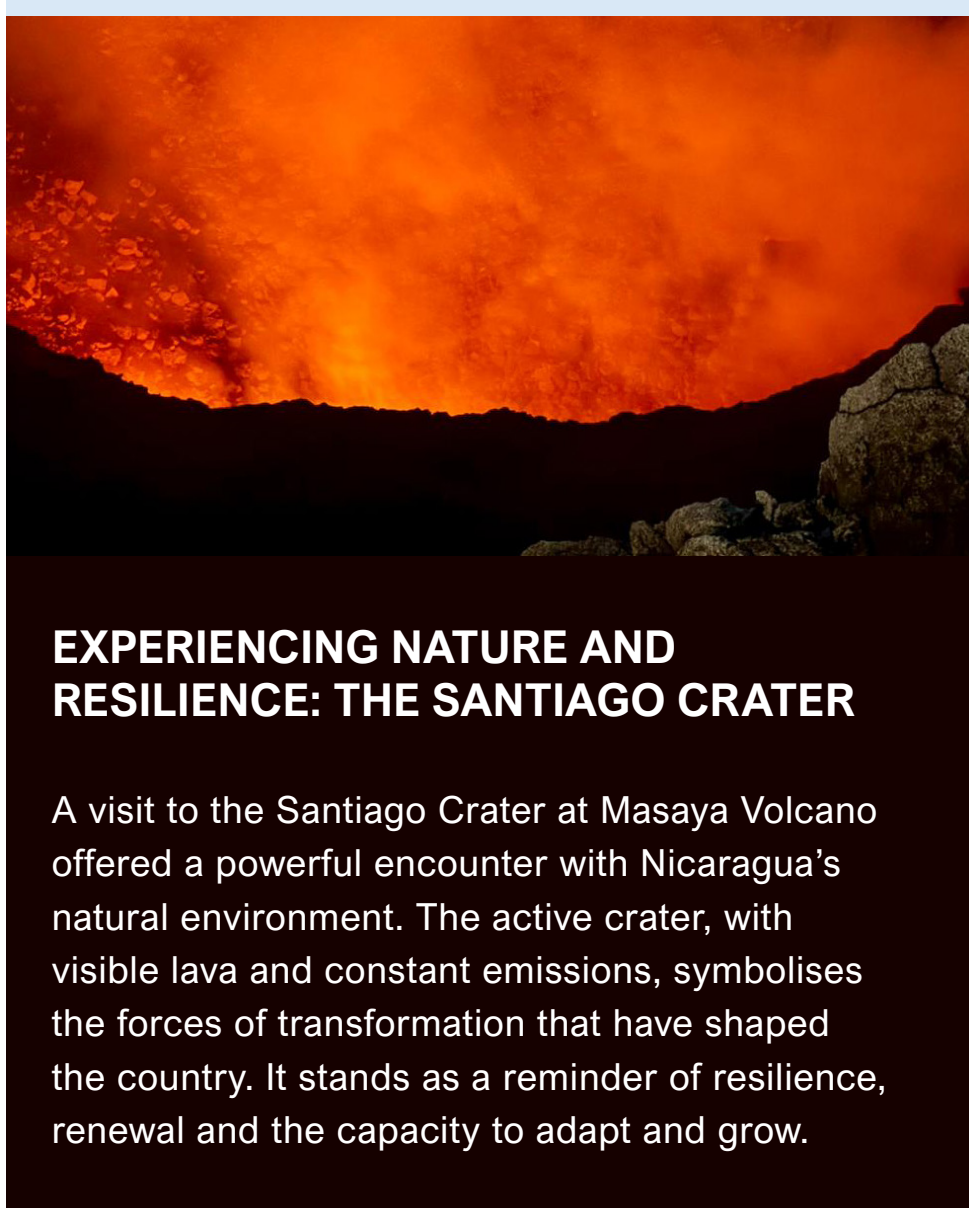
- Sharing best practices in oversight and law-making
- Strengthening institutional capacity
- Promoting collaboration in health, education and community development

This supports GPL's strategic objective of building a capable, ethical and developmental state while strengthening cooperative governance.

From Benchmarking to Impact

This visit underscores the importance of learning from countries with shared histories and similar developmental challenges.

Nicaragua demonstrates that meaningful progress is possible through strong political will, active community participation, investment in youth and women and recognition of culture and identity in development. Nicaragua reminds us that development is most effective when it is people-centred and inclusive. For Gauteng, the opportunity lies in translating these lessons into practical interventions that improve service delivery and enhance the wellbeing of citizens.



EXPERIENCING NATURE AND RESILIENCE: THE SANTIAGO CRATER

A visit to the Santiago Crater at Masaya Volcano offered a powerful encounter with Nicaragua's natural environment. The active crater, with visible lava and constant emissions, symbolises the forces of transformation that have shaped the country. It stands as a reminder of resilience, renewal and the capacity to adapt and grow.