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Improving Literacy in Honduras

USAID Honduras Reading Activity 2017–2023



Context

HRA supported over 500,000 primary school students for improved reading outcomes.

Education officials, teachers, and families in Honduras are committed to student learning and quality education for children in the country.

However, poverty, violence, corruption, economic and political instability, climate change, and natural disasters create obstacles to making this a reality for every child.

EDC, in partnership with the Honduran Ministry of Education, implemented the six-year USAID Honduras Reading Activity (HRA, 2017–2023) to improve reading outcomes for over 500,000 primary school students.



Theory of change

The HRA theory of change encompasses a comprehensive set of actions to improve reading outcomes for students in grades 1 to 6:

- If schools use updated reading curricula that reflects evidence-based practices and if decentralized Ministry of Education offices effectively manage and support reading instruction and assessment, then systemic capacity to implement evidence-based reading instruction is strengthened.
- If reading materials are developed based on evidence and if teachers and learners use those reading materials as teaching and learning tools, then reading instruction is improved.
- If teachers are trained to use effective methods, then capacity to provide quality reading instruction in grades 1 to 6 is improved.
- If parents and communities value education and support students in reading, then reading and learning opportunities and outcomes will be strengthened.



“
Being a teacher goes beyond just imparting knowledge. I want to be a teacher who motivates students to fight for their dreams, a teacher who supports her students so that they do not give up.

Mayra Orellana, teacher

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Approach



Strengthened education system

HRA specialists collaborated with the Honduran Ministry of Education to revise the national curriculum standards for Spanish in grades 1–6 and to strengthen the capacity of Ministry of Education technical personnel at the central and local levels.

Improved reading materials

In partnership with the Honduran Ministry of Education, the HRA team developed teaching and learning materials for reading in grades 1–6. Aligned with the updated reading standards and the Honduran National Curriculum, these high-quality resources, available in both print and digital formats, supported student learning inside and outside of the classroom.



Enhanced reading instruction

HRA specialists collaborated with the Ministry of Education in the development and implementation of a comprehensive teacher training plan focused on effective literacy instruction in primary school.

Engaged communities

HRA personnel supported parental and caregiver involvement in education, trained reading and library volunteers, and established community learning centers as well as school and community libraries.



Crosscutting and special initiatives

Throughout the project, HRA team members developed and implemented new initiatives in response to evolving priorities.

These initiatives included the following:

- Distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Learning recovery and remediation after schools re-opened
- Improved school safety
- Reintegration of out-of-school children into school
- Gender Equity and social inclusion
- A program to encourage enrollment and retention among 7th–9th graders



Activities



“

Although not all children learn in the same way, manuals and the GANE Levelling Guides are essential resources for teachers to help students imagine, discover, travel, and understand the world around them.

Mayra Orellana, teacher

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National Reading Standards

The National Reading Standards were aligned to a revised evidence-based approach to reading instruction.

HRA personnel supported the Honduran Ministry of Education to revise, validate, and formally adopt updated evidence-based National Reading Standards for grades 1–6. These revised standards are aligned to the updated teaching and learning materials and instructional approaches in the classroom.

Improved teaching and learning materials

In collaboration with the Honduran Ministry of Education, HRA specialists developed Spanish language teaching and learning materials aligned with the revised reading standards for grades 1–6.

Leo y Escribo series for grades 1–6 and accompanying teacher’s guides. The *Leo y Escribo* series (Spanish for “I Read and Write”) of student workbooks for grades 1–6, along with the accompanying teacher’s guides, aligns with the Honduran Ministry of Education curriculum. The HRA team, in collaboration with specialists from the Ministry of Education, incorporated the revised standards

for reading instruction, updated illustrations, integrated gender equity principles, and featured key figures in Honduran history. HRA also incorporated formative assessment strategies directly into the student workbooks. HRA created a teacher’s manual that outlines innovative, evidence-based instructional approaches specifically tailored for reading instruction.

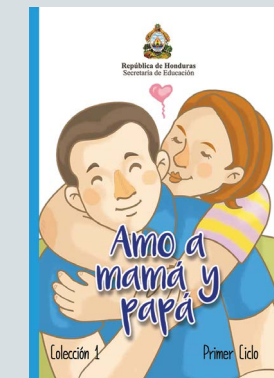
Grade 1 decodable readers and classroom materials. HRA personnel developed 44 decodable readers and printed and distributed sets of them. The decodable books, aligned with the curriculum’s letter and sound sequence, were provided to first-grade classrooms, along with mobile alphabets and classroom supplies.

GANE learning guides. In response to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic school closures, the HRA team developed and distributed the GANE guides (Spanish for *Guías de Apoyo a la Nivelación Educativa*) to support teachers in implementing remedial reading instruction.

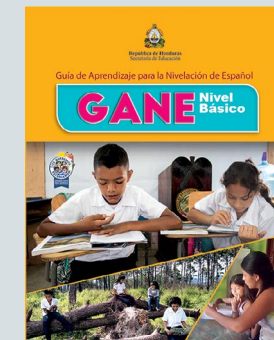
Leo y Escribo



Decodable Reader



GANE



School and community libraries

Together with school staff and community members, HRA team members established 75 school libraries and 24 community libraries. These libraries were made possible through the efforts of project-trained school personnel and community volunteers. Along with activities held within the libraries, library volunteers implemented outreach initiatives, such as the “Traveling Library” and “Traveling Backpack” which ensured that more students had easy access to books and learning materials.



“

Today, the children can enjoy reading when they come to the library. We are excited to serve them and encourage them to read—not by obligation but by choice.

Dina Roxana Orellana, veteran teacher and school librarian

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Teacher professional development

HRA specialists partnered with the Ministry of Education's Directorate of Professional Development and Regional Teacher Training Centers to develop and implement a comprehensive teacher professional development plan focused on effective literacy instruction.

Through this collaboration, HRA provided training to 1,350 teacher facilitators, more than 16,000 classroom teachers, and over 1,500 education officials.

HRA technical personnel trained a cadre of outstanding teachers as teacher facilitators. The HRA teacher facilitators played a vital role as peer leaders, providing training and technical assistance to their fellow classroom teachers. With a deep sense of responsibility and dedication to the practice of teaching, teacher facilitators became a driving force behind improved classroom instruction.



HRA provided training to more than 16,000 teachers.

They organized and led training sessions in their schools and school networks and provided ongoing support to enhance teachers' professional development. The 1,350 teacher facilitators have been recognized as professional development leaders by the Ministry of Education's General Directorate of Professional Development.

HRA personnel and teacher facilitators also carried out ongoing teacher coaching and pedagogic accompaniment with classroom teachers, and they trained school principals and local education authorities to carry out this role. These structured sessions, as well as teacher study circles established by HRA, supported teachers in discussing, reflecting on, and strengthening their practice.



Community participation

Parents' Associations. HRA personnel worked closely with school-level Parents' Associations, promoting and providing training in parental involvement in education and particularly in support of reading improvement. The HRA team successfully trained 466 Parents' Associations, who have led initiatives, such as refurbishing libraries and hosting reading events.

Youth reading volunteers. The HRA team recruited and trained over 10,700 youth reading volunteers, which were high school seniors who provided reading support to primary school students. HRA personnel also worked with the Ministry of Education and obtained approval for this program to be an official option for high school service learning requirements.





HRA worked to mitigate learning losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Crosscutting and special initiatives

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The HRA project supported continuity of learning and worked to mitigate learning losses resulting from prolonged school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- The project supported the Ministry of Education by developing daily audio and video reading lessons and then disseminating them through WhatsApp or broadcasting them on radio and television stations. The HRA team created over 1,000 multimedia learning resources and enhanced the Learning Passport online learning platform.
- HRA developed virtual teacher study circles and virtual teacher coaching, thereby providing materials to support teacher well-being and distance instruction during school closures.
- HRA supported connectivity for remote learning, including tablets, cell phones, and hotspots, to facilitate the teaching and learning process.
- Along with developing and disseminating multimedia and printed materials, HRA supplied schools with educational kits and biosafety materials for the safe return to school when schools re-opened.

Learning recovery. As schools re-opened, HRA specialists developed and implemented a comprehensive learning recovery strategy for reading based on Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) principles. This strategy involved administering a brief reading diagnostic, the results of which provided information to teachers on which activities and lessons in the *GANE* guides were appropriate for each student. Along with the training and pedagogic support the HRA team provided to teachers, they also developed a virtual learning reinforcement course that provided training in the learning recovery strategy.



Reintegration of out-of-school children. In partnership with the Honduran Ministry of Education, the HRA team worked to simplify and facilitate the reintegration of out-of-school children into the education system. HRA provided training to 700 school principals on reintegrating returning students into schools and incorporated guidance on reintegration into teacher training workshops and online courses.



Violence prevention

HRA personnel trained 6,800 educators to improve the safety of learning environments and to mitigate school-based violence, including gender-based violence.

Gender and social inclusion

HRA team members consistently integrated a gender and social inclusion focus into its educational materials and activities. HRA worked closely with the Ministry of Education to promote the active participation of both women and men in supporting children's reading, and they developed graphics and content for messaging campaigns related to gender equity, anti-bullying, and prevention of gender-based violence.



Public and private sector partners provided \$4.5 million to improve literacy outcomes.

Conditional transfers

The HRA team developed and piloted the Conditional Transfer Program, which provided financial support for 1,500 7th–9th grade students and their families to facilitate children's enrollment in school, regular attendance, and progression to the next grade.

Public-private partnerships

The HRA team leveraged more than \$4.5 million from public and private sector partners to improve literacy outcomes and address challenges, such as drop-out rates, lack of learning materials, and learning loss. HRA public and private partners contributed books and educational materials for classrooms and libraries, school supply kits, handwashing stations, radio and television spots for broadcast of lessons and educational campaigns, technology and connectivity, teacher training, school improvements, and food aid.

Achievements



500,000+
students benefited

3.5 million+
texts and other
educational materials
delivered

1,113
multimedia learning
materials created
in response to the
pandemic

75
school libraries
established

40
School Coexistence
Committees organized
and trained

16,000+
teachers trained

1,500
students and families
supported through
conditional transfers

10,719
youth volunteers
supported younger
students in reading
and writing

24
community libraries
established

National Standards
for Spanish Literacy
reviewed and updated

2,500
schools supported

\$4,500,000+
leveraged

1,500+
educational
authorities trained

466
Parents' Associations
trained to improve
literacy outcomes



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