



DE LECTORES A LÍDERES

The Honduras Reading Activity (HRA) provides better primary education for one of every two Honduran primary school students to boost reading scores by 20 percentage points.

HRA builds a stronger bond between families and their schools to strengthen community resilience and cohesion, retain children in school, and reduce irregular migration.

A child who reads and succeeds in school, will stay in school and more successfully transition to secondary school and employment.

COMING BACK HOME

The teaching and learning materials from the De Lectores a Líderes project help returning children find the identity of their country.

What does it mean to return to Honduras? For five returnee children, coming back to the community of La Majada, in the municipality of Zacapa, Santa Bárbara, is finding their way back home.

“It means seeing my grandmother again,” says nine-year-old girl Jessica Lopez. “Everyone here is just like me, and it’s fun to spend time with my new friends,” she says, while forming words with her alphabet letters.

For school principal Wilton Acosta, of the Donaldo Ernesto Reyes School, this is a common scene. “Parents return to the community and bring their children to our school. Of course, we are happy to have them back, and we are even happier to have updated materials so that they can continue their educational process without difficulties,” says Acosta as he watches the children play during recess. “I remember them before they left. It is very pleasing for me to see them safe and sound.”

However, there are challenges to address with returnee children. “Some come back scared. Others come back speaking English. Some are silent, and others are surprised. However, that feeling of being in their very own country helps them to adjust in a matter of weeks.”



The teaching and learning materials from the De Lectores a Líderes (Lectores) project help many returned children find the identity of their country. Each page, each story, each activity, and each use of the methodology empowers, develops, and identifies a generation that has impressive needs to belong and grow.

“Our job is to save the children of Honduras,” says Elias Bustamante, master trainer of the Lectores project. “It is an honor to put in our grain of sand in benefit of the education of the children of Honduras. And it’s much more rewarding when it comes to children returning to their own country.”

For the project staff, helping returnee children create their own dreams of peace and hope in their country through the development of their reading skills is rewarding and enriching work.

For more information about the De Lectores a Líderes project, contact: ibe@edc.org.



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THE JOY OF SOLIDARITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Honduran high school students learn solidarity through volunteering activities at schools across the country. The De Lectores a Líderes program prepares many of them to teach younger students in their communities to read.

Every Saturday, Valeri Jerezano, 16, tutors students at the Primero de Febrero school in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Valeri is in grade 11 and attends an exclusive private school. In Honduras, all high school students are required to complete 100 hours of community service in order to graduate. This requirement is referred to as the Trabajo Educativo Social (TES) and usually consists of planting trees or helping the elderly. However, Valeri was invited to complete her service through the De Lectores a Líderes program by helping children improve their reading skills.

“At first, I thought it was just a literacy project,” Valeri says. “But this is so much more. I didn’t know reading books or teaching children to like books could be so fulfilling.”

Since October 2018, Valeri has tutored three children as part of her TES, two girls and one boy, who are between six and seven years old. “The fact that I’m young and closer to their age than their parents or a teacher helps my children feel relaxed and less afraid of making mistakes,” Valeri says. “That is the most important thing. I can already see they are improving.”



The De Lectores a Líderes community participation team has been impressed with the commitment of the youth volunteers. “It’s heartwarming what the volunteers do,” says Maritza Zelaya, HRA’s community participation specialist.

“Volunteers go beyond what they are asked, and they do it from their heart. They even buy books and give them to the children. They make furniture for the classroom. They laugh, dance, and enjoy these sessions, making us hopeful and happy that our work is being carried on by the next generation.”

And volunteering benefits both the tutor and student. “One of my pupils cut her baleada in half and offered it to me,” Valeri recalls, with emotion in her voice. “She comes from a poor family, and I’m sure that was all the food she was going to eat that day.”

For Valeri, this unexpected act of kindness left an impression on her. “This kind of situation teaches you a lesson of humbleness and care,” she says. “It taught me the joy of solidarity and hope for a better country.”



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REKINDLING LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN HONDURAS

Teacher professional development is at the center of efforts to improve learning for over half a million students.

Every day, students in Honduras are confronted with significant barriers to getting a quality education. Few schools have computers, and many do not have enough books or teachers. Students also face the pervasive threat of violence. Gang presence is particularly acute in Honduras' large cities, and gang members often infiltrate schools, intimidating teachers and students. In some cases, gangs prevent students and teachers from attending classes, as the walk to school would require them to pass through rival territory.

But teaching young students how to read, says teacher Elena Morales, gives them relief from daily stressors and opens their minds to new ideas and experiences—and at the same time provides them with the skills they need to take advantage of future educational, economic, and civic opportunities. “The only thing that can give hope to children is reading,” says Morales. “[When they read], their mind flies to other places.”

Morales is one of more than 800 teacher facilitators with EDC's USAID-funded De Lectores a Líderes project, which is working to improve literacy education for more than half a million students in Honduras. At the core of the project are dedicated teacher facilitators such as Morales, who models effective teaching strategies, observes lessons, and helps teachers improve their literacy instruction at a school in a gang-controlled community in Tegucigalpa, the country's capital.



Alba Espinoza is another teacher facilitator. She journeys four hours—two by bus, two on foot—to do similar work in a remote community of about 300 people in the western part of the country. The rural village lacks electricity, cell phone service, and Internet access, and without Espinoza's weekly trips to the community, it is unlikely that the teachers there would ever receive any support.

“Basic things, like making photocopies, are difficult here,” says Espinoza. “It's like being on an island.”

Both Morales and Espinoza face many challenges in the schools they support. But the work they are doing is critical to the long-term improvement of Honduras' educational system, says EDC's Vilma Valerio, who is the teacher training advisor for De Lectores a Líderes.

“The work of teacher facilitators is the backbone of the project,” says Valerio. “They are the ones who train and accompany the broad base of classroom teachers, and they represent the only real chance for sustainable activity due to their place in the educational system.” Teacher facilitators such as Morales and Espinoza are inspiring educators to improve their practice.

For evidence that this approach is working, one only has to talk to Morales, who remains dedicated despite the many challenges that she—and the teachers and students she supports—face every day. “We do not give up,” Morales says. “Outside these walls, there are constant problems of violence and gangs, but we fight for children.”