



USAID | **HONDURAS**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

IMPROVING THE QUALITY, EFFICIENCY, AND EQUITY OF BASIC EDUCATION IN HONDURAS

Latin American and Caribbean Education Profiles 1999–2004



PROFILES OF USAID EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS: INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This publication is one in a series profiling the recent work of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the education sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It is intended for all who are interested in learning more about USAID, international development, and education activities in the LAC region. While USAID currently has offices or development activities in 17 countries throughout the region, its education development efforts are concentrated in eight: the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru.

The purpose of the series is to provide information on how the U.S. government is responding to diverse education needs in these countries through a variety of initiatives—ranging from innovative projects that increase educational access for underserved populations to efforts to foster policy dialogue and better decision-making in the sector. Bringing these initiatives to life typically requires coordination with and participation from a variety of international, national, and local partners.

The publications highlight USAID efforts in these countries during a five year period, 1999–2004. Each profile treats one country and includes a succinct analysis of key problems that limit access to quality education there, defining those challenges within historical, political, and social contexts. The publication outlines USAID's strategies for targeting its education investments, describes specific projects for addressing key issues, and shares lessons learned/best practices to improve future programming.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Preschool Honduran girl drawing in a USAID-funded workbook.

COVER: Honduran preschool children using colors to identify the different parts of the rooster.

All images courtesy of U.S. Agency for International Development.

HONDURAS AT A GLANCE



GEOGRAPHY

Population: 6.8 million (July 2004 estimate)

Land Area: 112,090 sq. km (about the size of Louisiana)

Capital: Tegucigalpa (population 1.15 million in metropolitan area)

GOVERNMENT

Government Type: Democratic constitutional republic

Current President: Ricardo Maduro, elected to a four-year term in November 2001, inaugurated January 2002

ECONOMY

Total Gross Domestic Product: US\$6.9 billion (2003 estimate)

Per Capita Gross National Income: US\$947 (2003 estimate)

Population Living on Less Than US\$2 a Day: 44.4 percent (1990-2002 estimate average)

Human Development Index: .672 (compared with .777 LAC regional average—2002)

Overall Donor Assistance: \$386 million (\$201 million in donations and \$185 million in loans—2003 estimate)

HEALTH AND CULTURE

Median Age: 19 years

Life Expectancy at Birth: 66.2 years

Annual Population Growth Rate: 2.24 percent (2004 estimate)

Chronic Malnutrition: 33 percent of children under 5 years

Languages: Spanish, Garifuna, and several Amerindian dialects

Official Language: Spanish

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and European) 90 percent, Amerindian 7 percent, black 2 percent, white 1 percent

EDUCATION

Compulsory Education: Grades 1-9, in theory (but not in reality, as some sixth graders lack access to seventh through ninth grades)

Literacy Rate: 81.5 percent (male, 81.8 percent; female, 81.3 percent) of those age 15 and older (2004 estimate)

Primary (Grades 1-6) Completion Rate: 77.8 percent (2003 estimate)

Secondary Completion Rate: 23.4 percent (2003 estimate)

Primary Net Enrollment: 89.3 percent (2004 estimate)

Middle School (grades 7-9) Net Enrollment: 38.2 percent (2004 estimate)

Secondary (grades 10-12) Net Enrollment: 21.3 percent (2004 estimate)

Tertiary Net Enrollment: 15.9 percent (2001 estimate)

Public Expenditures on Education Sector: 7.3 percent of GDP (2003 estimate)

HONDURAS AT A GLANCE

A GENERATION AGO, FEWER THAN HALF OF ALL HONDURAN CHILDREN WERE GRADUATING FROM SIXTH GRADE. THANKS IN PART TO USAID ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, FOUR OF FIVE CHILDREN NOW DO.

As a framework for action and policy, the Ministry of Education developed an Education Development Plan to modernize the education system's structure, improve quality of education, promote community participation and efficiency in higher education, and support the nonformal education sector. Although gains have been made over the years, the Honduran education system still encounters shortcomings, such as lack of equitable access to education opportunities, poor quality of instruction, high repetition and dropout rates, and inadequate teacher training. When considering all primary school dropouts and repeaters, the cost of systemic inefficiency to the Honduran government is more than \$22 million annually.

Activities over the past five years have been guided by two USAID Country Strategies—the first from 1998 through 2003, and the latter from 2003 through 2009. In 2000 the education portfolio was revised to respond to the needs created by Hurricane Mitch. New objectives expanded alternative basic education programs, encouraged policy change and programs to improve quality of education and reduction of repetition, and also expanded vocational education. USAID's education strategy in Honduras contributes to a better educated Honduran workforce by expanding access to quality basic education at the preschool, middle school, and secondary levels and by working with the government to develop quality education standards, testing, and evaluation.

USAID/Honduras' 2003-2009 Country Strategy:

- 1) Emphasizes increased and improved social sector investments and transparency.**
- 2) Stresses increased and improved educational opportunities for youth.**

USAID/HONDURAS HAS MOVED ITS PRIMARY EMPHASIS FROM EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY TO BROADER SUPPORT FOR POLICY REFORM.

“The quality and relevance of primary and secondary schooling in LAC countries continue to cause concern, as the majority of students attend weak and underfunded schools and fail to acquire basic skills in mathematics, language, and science. Fewer than 30 percent of students in the region complete secondary school, and many of those who do finish lack the skills to compete in the workplace—let alone in an increasingly competitive global economy. USAID programs are improving educational systems by developing innovative pilots and more effective service delivery models, many of which are being expanded by host governments and multilateral development banks.”

**—Senate Testimony of Adolfo Franco,
USAID Assistant Administrator for
the LAC Bureau, March 2004**

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF USAID/HONDURAS

“Since 1961, USAID has intensely supported Honduran education. USAID/Honduras acknowledges the intricate bond between education and economic growth and has been exceptionally proactive in ensuring that our mission portfolio has a strong education component. Beginning with our assistance in the early 1960s (when we built schools that provided Honduran children and youth, particularly in the rural areas, with the opportunity for education) to the 1970s (when through a regional project we printed textbooks and began our emphasis on quality and efficiency that persists today) to the 1980s (when we first became involved in vocational education) to our current programs (which attend to preschool, alternative basic education, and assessment), the Agency has been at the cutting edge of supplying access to quality education to children, youth, and adults. Through our education programs, we will continue our commitment to lay the foundation for a future of better opportunities for all Hondurans.”

—Paul Tuebner

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PART I

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

EDUCATION CONDITIONS IN HONDURAS

Over the past two and a half decades, Honduras has made steady progress in the education sector.¹ Preschool gross enrollment rates more than tripled, from 17.1 percent in 1990 to 52.8 percent in 2003. Though fewer than half of students completed primary school (sixth grade) in 1980, the level in 2003 was 78 percent. National illiteracy rates also improved—dropping from 27.3 percent in 1990 to 18.5 percent in 2004—though considerable urban–rural disparities persist.

Notwithstanding these gains, perennial shortcomings of the Honduran education system include 1) deficiencies in the preparation of the emerging workforce to compete in the regional and global economies, 2) a lack of equitable

access to education opportunities, 3) poor quality of instruction, 4) high student dropout and repetition rates, 5) inadequate teacher training and outdated curricula, 6) low student achievement, and 7) systemic management weaknesses. A lack of sustained educational and political leadership has frustrated attempts to address these deficiencies. Obstacles to education reform have also arisen from various factors, such as a lack of resources, constraints external to the education sector (e.g., Hurricane Mitch, high poverty levels), and deficiencies in the preparation, supervision, and pedagogical support for teachers.

Repetition rates in the primary education system have historically been high, with more than 17 percent of first graders in 2003 having to repeat the grade. Coupled with a first grade dropout rate of about 4 percent, more than 20 percent of students do not

¹ For an excellent overview (in Spanish) of educational progress in Honduras, see the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas 2002 national "report card" at www.preal.cl/docs-resumen/RCHonduras.pdf. For annual performance on the goals and indicators for the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative, contact anedh@anedh.hn.



Student in PREPI (Proyecto de Educación Prebásica Interactiva) interactive radio preschool program.

complete the first grade in one year. When considering all primary school dropouts and repeaters (144,560 students in primary schools), the cost of this systemic inefficiency to the government of Honduras is enormous—over \$22 million annually.

While gross enrollment for seventh grade is 75 percent, high dropout rates result in 65 percent of youth not completing the ninth grade of their basic education. Urban areas initially enroll more than 90 percent of eligible middle school students—in contrast to a complete lack of access in many rural municipalities, and masking the fact that many adolescents drop out of school to enter the workforce. Even fewer youth complete secondary school, including only a minuscule percentage of youth from rural areas and low-income families.

As the number of school-age children has grown—nearly half of the Honduran population now is between ages 5 and 24—the demand for teachers has increased. However, there remains little motivation for teachers to become actively engaged in the educational system. Both pre-service and in-service teacher training are in need of reform, and relations between the Honduran Ministry of Education (MOE) and teachers' unions have been strained over the past several years—resulting in numerous strikes and lost school days for children and older youth.

It is also problematic that roughly 20 percent of the population over 10 never completed the third grade of primary school. As a consequence of the low level of schooling of the labor force and a pervasive shortage of trained professionals, productivity rates for many Honduran economic sectors are among the lowest in Latin America. The inferior educational level of the workforce clearly hinders Honduras' ability to compete in the global economy and to engage in trade and attract foreign investment.

In 2003 the government of Honduras invested 7.3 percent of its gross domestic product in education. Although this is nearly double the Latin American average of 4 percent, more than 95 percent of that education budget covers salaries. Thus the level of discretionary spending is severely constrained.

USAID REGIONAL STRATEGY

In response to dramatically reduced region-wide funding levels—from \$190 million in 1990 to \$52.7 million in 2004—USAID education programming in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has shifted from large national programs to smaller, targeted geographic areas and an emphasis on policy dialogue. Bilateral mission education activities are based on four overarching regional objectives: *improved access*, *equity*, *efficiency*, and *quality*. The LAC Regional Education Program, based in

USAID/Washington, supports initiatives under the Summit of the Americas,² the promotion of education reform in the region, and the Intermediate Results of 1) improved environment for education reform, 2) improved skills of teachers and administrators, and 3) improved relevance and skills of workforce.

The four education programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua now operate under the Central America and Mexico (CAM) Regional Strategy. The CAM strategy directs bilateral and regional USAID investment toward three performance arenas—*just and democratic governance, economic freedom, and investment in people*—closely aligned with Millennium Challenge Account³ goals. As a result, USAID education activities in Central America are now centered on achieving:

- Improved access, quality, and efficiency of basic education.
- Increased and more effective decentralized investments in education.
- Increased and more efficient expenditures by ministries of education.
- The establishment of private sector alliances.
- Greater community involvement in education.
- Innovative approaches to increasing and improving educational opportunities.

USAID/HONDURAS: HISTORY AND STRATEGIES IN EDUCATION

USAID/Honduras has been active in the education sector since the U.S. government established a presence in the country in 1961. In the education sector, the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Japan are currently among the largest bilateral donors. Activities over the past five years have been guided by two USAID Country Strategies—the first from Fiscal Year (FY) 1998 through FY2003, and the latest from FY2003 through FY2008.

The goal of the previous strategy was “a more democratic and prosperous Honduras.” Education activities were initially implemented under the Strategic Objective “expanded and equitable access to productive resources and markets.” The assumption was that for the productivity of the poor to increase, it is necessary to increase their human capital. The strategy thus concentrated on both improving the knowledge base and productivity of the labor force through alternative basic education delivery systems, strengthening vocational training schools, and encouraging policy reforms.



School children and their teacher dancing to a CD that describes the parts of the body and various emotions.

² For background information on the Summit of the Americas, see usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/summit_of_americas.html and www.americasnet.net.

³ The Millennium Challenge Account is a Bush administration initiative to increase assistance to those developing countries whose governments rule justly, encourage economic freedom, and invest in their people. For more on this initiative, see www.mca.gov, www.usaid.gov/mca, and www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html.



An EDUCATODOS group listening to a lesson.

In 2000 the education portfolio was revised to respond to the needs created by Hurricane Mitch. As a result, a separate new Strategic Objective was created: “improved opportunity to obtain basic education and vocational skills.” Efforts to achieve this objective sought the following results: 1) expansion of alternative basic education programs, 2) expansion of vocational education, and 3) establishment of policy changes and programs to improve the quality of basic education, reduce repetition, and decentralize.

The current 2003–2009 Honduras Country Strategy responds to the CAM Regional Strategy, calling on USAID missions to move from service delivery to policy reform, and to make investments that have national and regional impacts a priority. Under the Strategic Objective⁴ of “Investing in people: healthier, better educated people,” education assistance in Honduras now emphasizes 1) increased and improved social sector investments and transparency, and 2) increased and improved educational opportunities for youth. The program concentrates on serving children, youths, and young adults from low-income families in rural and marginal urban areas to help meet the goals of the Honduran Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative.

USAID support contributes to a better educated Honduran workforce by

expanding access to quality basic education for preschool, middle school, grades 10–11, and through alternative delivery systems to reach out-of-school youth. The USAID Mission assists the Honduran government in developing quality education standards, testing and evaluation, and in decentralizing alternative basic education management to the local level. The Mission also supports government efforts to reform vocational education through public-private partnerships and stronger private sector linkages to ensure appropriate training for meeting business demands.

The overall resources available for education have grown substantially, with Development Assistance⁵ funding in 2004 (\$5.8 million) at double the 1999 level.

OVERVIEW

Part 2 of this report profiles five of USAID/Honduras' many activities. A list of suggested reading about other USAID projects in Honduras—as well as more about the four projects featured herein—appears at the end of this publication.

The *EDUCATODOS: Alternative Basic Education Project* teaches out-of-school youths and adults through alternate learning approaches so they may begin or complete primary education, while the *Education for All-Fast Track Initiative* aims to reduce repeti-

⁴The other two Strategic Objectives in Honduras are “just and democratic governance: more responsive, transparent governance” and “economic freedom: open, diversified, expanding economies.”

⁵Under Chapters 1 and 10 of the Foreign Assistance Act, Development Assistance is designed primarily to promote economic growth and equitable distribution of its benefits.

tion rates, increase student achievement and improve quality of instruction. To increase access to education, the *PREPI: Interactive Radio Instruction-Based Preschool Project* reaches children unserved by the formal system through an alternative system of education. Through the *MIDEH: Measuring Student Achievement Project*, USAID supports the Ministry of Education (MOE), local education institutions, and educators to help ensure achievement of goals and indicators established for Honduras. Finally, the *Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training Program (CETT)* is improving reading instruction in grades 1–3, as part of a Presidential Initiative. Honduras' National Pedagogical University is the lead institution for the Central America and Dominican Republic CETT.

Part 3 spells out the impact of USAID education activities in Honduras over the past five years, such as closing the gaps in education access and quality and reducing repetition and dropout rates. It offers eight lessons learned from the various USAID/Honduras projects, explaining (among many other things) that volunteers are essential in an alternative education delivery system such as EDUCATODOS, that management structures and models must change over time, and that teacher practices improve student achievement and reduce repetition rates. The section concludes with an overview of what the USAID plans to achieve in Honduras by 2009 by shifting its primary emphasis from education service delivery to broader support for policy reform.

MESSAGE FROM USAID/HONDURAS EDUCATION OFFICE

“USAID/Honduras has played a critical role in shaping the Honduran educational system. We can be proud of our contributions in basic education and vocational training. The mission has consistently emphasized initiatives that address the core of the problem in the education sector. We have concentrated our efforts on offering the children and youth of the country a pertinent education, one that prepares them for playing key roles in the economic and civic growth of their communities. Through our achievement in developing the alternative education programs PREPI and EDUCATODOS, even the poorest children and youth living in the most rural areas of the country now have access to preschool and basic education kindergarten to ninth grade. Our support of the community vocational centers has ensured that a significant number of youth get the opportunity to receive training in a lifetime vocation. As one of the major donors in education, we have joined with other donors in endorsing the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative. It is my deepest wish that the Agency will take into account the tremendous and lasting impact our education programs have on Hondurans’ quality of life and maintain an increasingly supportive role.”

—Evelyn Rodríguez-Pérez

PART 2

ACTIVITY PROFILES

EDUCATODOS

ALTERNATIVE BASIC EDUCATION PROJECT

EDUCATION FOR ALL-FAST TRACK INITIATIVE

MIDEH

MEASURING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT

PREPI

INTERACTIVE RADIO INSTRUCTION-BASED
PRESCHOOL PROJECT

REGIONAL PROJECTS

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING





An EDUCATODOS group working with their facilitator.

EDUCATODOS⁶

ALTERNATIVE BASIC EDUCATION PROJECT EDUCATION FOR ALL PROGRAM

Implemented by the Honduran Ministry of Education (MOE)

Dates: September 1995 to September 2009

Funding: \$22,085,529

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

In Honduras, many youth do not have the opportunity to continue studying beyond sixth grade, and millions of young people have not completed their basic education. Estimates indicate that effectively expanding high-quality middle schools to provide education to the growing young population will require many decades. Addressing this situation has been an enormous challenge for education authorities, since basic education has historically been delivered in the classroom. In a country with limited resources, it is virtually impossible for the formal education system to absorb all of the new students and help out-of-school youth complete their basic education without complementary support from alternative delivery systems.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

With USAID's technical and financial support, the Ministry of Education (MOE) initiated the EDUCATODOS Alternative Basic Education Project to provide out-of-school youth and adults

alternative mechanisms to begin or finish primary education (grades 1–6). EDUCATODOS extended its reach and developed an innovative middle school program for grades 7–9 in 2002. Under its new Country Strategy, USAID will consider support for the development of curricula and materials for grades 10 and 11 to extend secondary education coverage.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The objective of the program is to increase the economic participation and incomes of poor individuals. From 1995 through 2004 the program provided 450,000 person-years of basic education. The projected increases in incomes associated with the increased levels of schooling obtained through EDUCATODOS exceed \$450 million.⁷

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

A new integrated curriculum for grades 1–9 was developed both for the traditional school-based education system and for out-of-school, text-based, and interactive radio instruction (IRI) education systems.

⁶ EDUCATODOS – Name derived from Educación Para Todos in Spanish or Education for All in English.

⁷ USAID/Honduras bases this estimate on several surveys conducted over recent years showing increases in earnings for each additional school year of education obtained from EDUCATODOS. The findings are consistent with data from household surveys conducted by the Honduran government.

EDUCATODOS trained volunteer facilitators to use the curricula and educational materials. The curriculum—updated to reflect a modern, participatory, and active learning approach—includes texts and complementary instructional materials, as well as IRI scripts and materials necessary for delivering the curriculum through distance education techniques.

EDUCATODOS pilot-tested an interactive television program for seventh through ninth grade with excellent results, demonstrating that the program can reduce dropout rates by up to 40 percent and increase student achievement by more than 50 percent over traditional delivery systems for middle school education.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

USAID has supported EDUCATODOS' expansion for program delivery nationwide, in partnership with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), municipal governments, and private enterprise. Currently, more than 4,000 centers in 13 departments are teaching the curriculum for first through ninth grades.

EDUCATODOS has done an impressive job of recruiting volunteer facilitators to convene learning groups in communities throughout the service area. More than 4,000 facilitators are involved in the program, providing critical oversight and assistance in centers throughout Honduras.

The activity has substantially exceeded its objective of working collaboratively with NGOs and municipalities. Hundreds of formal agreements are in place. The project has also had notable success in developing collaborative agreements with business cosponsors to offer programs in workplace literacy and basic education.

EDUCATODOS has excelled in establishing collaborative linkages and partnerships. Contributions have come in the form of bonuses and incentive payments to facilitators, financial support for broadcasting lessons over the radio, broadcasters' in-kind donations of air time, support for training facilitators, purchase of radios/cassette players and educational materials, and collaborative assistance in setting up learning centers.

With nearly 450,000 person-years of schooling obtained through EDUCATODOS, the lifetime earning of participants should increase by more than \$400 million—greatly surpassing the original target of \$50 million and demonstrating the program's potential to contribute to the goals of the Honduran Poverty Reduction Strategy.



Grade 6 students at the end of a group activity in a school supported by EFA-FTI.

EDUCATION FOR ALL-FAST TRACK INITIATIVE

Implemented by the MOE, the Academy for Educational Development, the American Institutes for Research, and the National Association of Former Peace Scholarship Recipients for the Development of Honduras
Dates: October 2004 – September 2008
Funding: \$7,000,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

The Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) in Honduras targets weaknesses at the preschool and primary levels: the percentage of children completing sixth grade (78 percent in 2003), the percentage of age-appropriate sixth grade graduates (25 percent in 2004), poor academic achievement in math and Spanish, high repetition and dropout rates, and late enrollments of first grade students.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

The World Education Forum—held in Senegal in April 2000—re-affirmed a comprehensive view of basic education and its critical role in empowering people and transforming societies.⁸ The forum's core goals are to provide universal access to learning, emphasize equity, emphasize learning outcomes, broaden the means and the scope of basic education, enhance the environment for learning, and strengthen partnerships for education.

Four goals and indicators constitute the Framework for Action for Honduras and donors from 2003 through 2015:

1. Increase gross enrollment rate to 100 percent and net sixth grade completion rate to 85 percent.
2. Provide one year of high-quality preschool education for all children.
3. Increase student achievement on standardized tests in mathematics and Spanish to 70 percent.
4. Reduce repetition rates to less than 1 percent in each grade of primary school.

In 2002 the government of Honduras prepared an Education for All Plan within the framework of the Millennium Goals and EFA-FTI. The international donor community approved the plan in November 2002 and formed the basis for a memorandum of understanding between the Honduran government and nine coop-

⁸ Additionally, at the September 2000 Millennium Summit, 147 world leaders agreed to a global compact known as the Millennium Development Goals. Eight goals are backed by an action plan that combats poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. Goals 2 and 3 are directly related to primary education.

erating partners including the U.S. government, which was signed in October 2003.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

Honduras' EFA-FTI Plan concentrates on achieving on-time enrollment, improved quality of instruction, and reduced dropout—all essential conditions for ensuring that all children not only have access to primary school but also stay in school and successfully complete the primary cycle.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

USAID's EFA-FTI support is being channeled through the MIDEH: Measuring Student Achievement Project (see following profile) during 2004–2006.

- The U.S. government has committed to implementing specific activities from the EFA-FTI Plan for teacher training, training primary school supervisors, and

providing decentralized technical assistance for the MOE's departmental, district, and municipal supervisors.

- Increasing student achievement and reducing repetition and dropout rates are the highest priorities, since current performance is low and improvements in these areas are imperative if more children are to complete primary school.
- The EFA-FTI Plan has integrated elements from two highly successful USAID programs: 1) the Salvemos primer ciclo (Save the First Cycle) pilot project, which has reduced repetition rates and increased student achievement, and 2) the interactive radio program in mathematics for grades 1–3, which has increased average student achievement for participating children.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

Since 2005 is the first full year of EFA-FTI implementation in Honduras, annual achievements can be monitored on the national, departmental, and municipal levels by contacting the National Association of Former Peace Scholarship Recipients for the Development of Honduras anedh@anedh.hn.



Teachers working together to develop test items.

MIDEH

MEASURING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development, American Institutes for Research, and the National Association of Former Peace Scholarship Recipients for the Development of Honduras
Dates: September 2004 to January 2007
Funding: \$9,173,851

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

The Honduras Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the EFA-FTI Plan established ambitious goals for Honduras in the education sector:

The PRS, approved in August 2001, will receive funding from the Honduran government and various donors. PRS goals for education are to 1) increase the coverage of preschool programs by 100 percent, 2) achieve a 95 percent net enrollment rate in primary education, 3) achieve a 70 percent net enrollment rate for seventh to ninth grades, 4) ensure that 50 percent of youth complete secondary education, and 5) attain improvements in the quality of education at all levels.

Honduras' EFA-FTI Plan contains several goals for 2015: 1) increase the percentage of children completing the sixth grade, 2) increase the percentage of age-appropriate sixth grade graduates, 3) improve the academic achievement in mathematics and Spanish, 4) reduce primary school repetition and dropout rates, and 5) increase the percentage of age-appropriate first grade enrollments.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

In September 2003, USAID signed a Strategic Objective Agreement with the Government of Honduras to implement a Country Strategy. The agreement includes a commitment from USAID to finance technical assistance, training, and related costs for education policy reforms—which will help Honduras meet its PRS, EFA-FTI, and USAID goals and indicators through 2009.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The broad purpose of the Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras (MIDEH) program is to provide wide-ranging support for the MOE, local education institutions, and educators in order to achieve the goals and indicators consensually established for Honduras. Specific program objectives are to 1) increase student achievement in Spanish and mathematics, 2) reduce student failure and dropout rates, 3) improve student flow rates from grade to grade, and 4) increase access to instruction in the seventh through twelfth grades.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

Activities will aim to achieve the following:

- Provide recommendations to the MOE, EDUCATODOS, and USAID to strengthen the EDUCATODOS alternative basic education system for grades 7–9 and establish an alternative delivery system for secondary education to help meet PRS goals by expanding access and improving completion rates.
- Develop standards, transparent evaluation criteria, and a standardized testing system to increase student learning and achievement.
- Design and implement decentralized technical assistance and training to meet EFA-FTI repetition and dropout indicators and the goals for the percentage of children completing primary education.
- Help the MOE and Honduran civil society achieve a consensus to implement the Foro Nacional de Convergencia (FONAC) (National Synergy Forum)⁹ recommendations for transforming the education sector and achieving EFA-FTI/PRS goals and indicators.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

Since the MIDEH project has recently begun, it is too soon to report on accomplishments. Expected results over the next two years include increased participation in and successful completion of the EDUCATODOS grades 7–9 program and the identification of critical elements of an alternative delivery system for secondary education.

The project will develop realistic, world-class content standards and competencies in Spanish and math for grades 1–12, based on criterion-referenced standardized tests, a bank of test items, the MOE's new National Basic Curriculum, and a testing system based on the curriculum's most essential content standards in Spanish and math.

USAID expects that low-cost and reliable test administration and scoring strategies will be developed to rapidly score tests and provide effective feedback for teachers, schools, parents, and communities. The project will provide decentralized technical assistance and training for 18 MOE departmental offices, district and municipal personnel, and 40,000 primary school teachers, principals, and supervisors. Finally, strategies will be put into place to increase community and parental participation in schools, with local NGOs and municipalities collaborating to meet EFA-FTI and PRS goals.

⁹ FONAC is the forum through which Honduras developed its sustainable Human Development Strategy.



Teacher and students interacting during a lesson at the chalkboard.

PREPI

INTERACTIVE RADIO INSTRUCTION-BASED PRESCHOOL PROJECT

Implemented by the Education Development Center and Fundación para la Educación Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu (FEREMA)
Dates: April 2003 to August 2005
Funding: \$1,867,891

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Though primary school coverage has improved significantly over the past two decades in Honduras, access to preschool education remains limited to fewer than 30 percent of children ages 3 to 6. This situation contributes to low attendance and high repetition across the primary cycle, particularly in the early grades.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

In recognition of the myriad benefits of preschool to improved student readiness and performance, the MOE established a policy prioritizing 5 year-old children, ensuring one year of high-quality preschool instruction, in lieu of services for all children ages 3 to 6. Under the EFA-FTI Plan, all children are to receive one year of high-quality preschool instruction, and more than 70 percent of all 5 year-old children should be enrolled in a preschool program by 2006. Although preschool is currently not compulsory, the Honduran government plans to institute a mandatory year of preschool education.

To reinforce these efforts, USAID is supporting the development of an alternative delivery system of preschool education that serves as the

cornerstone for a national program to reach children unserved by the current system. USAID funded PREPI—an interactive radio instruction-based preschool project (Proyecto de Educación Prebásica Interactiva in Spanish)—targeting 100,000 5 year-olds annually.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The principal goal is to achieve greater efficiency of student learning and reduce failure rates in the early grades of primary school by developing and demonstrating a high-quality program of preschool education that can be offered with significant recurrent cost savings. Other goals are to 1) increase the percentage of children enrolled in preschool programs, 2) reduce student repetition, particularly in the first grade, and 3) improve student performance in essential cognitive and social skills, including early literacy.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

USAID/Honduras is carrying out the project through several broad initiatives:

- *Develop an interactive, multi-channel learning package.* The program will provide 108 three-hour preschool lessons, including interactive radio/audio instruction. The multichannel system

includes posters, games, lessons recorded on CDs and broadcasted by radio stations, print materials for students, teacher/facilitator activity guides, and parent-support education materials.

- *Select, organize, and manage learning centers.* In consultation with the MOE and USAID, the project staff chose 64 pilot center locations in areas where current coverage and first grade pass rates are low and repetition/failure rates high. Guidelines were developed for learning centers, NGOs, private companies, and others for providing incentives and career development paths to facilitators.
- *Establish a learning center network.* The program has established a network of community-based and MOE learning center providers that includes NGOs and municipalities. Each learning center has received comprehensive information and materials for the preschool classes.
- *Develop a plan to expand the program nationally.* With public and private support, the plan will establish more than 2,500 additional centers during 2005 and eventually reach all kindergarten-age children.
- *Create training packages for facilitators.* These include training activities that incorporate continual reinforcement and learning through application, using a “training of trainers” approach.

Additionally, the program has developed a system of continual assessment of learners for use by facilitators and a set of learning achievement measures appropriate for use at the end of the kindergarten year. A national campaign was designed to increase parental and community awareness, highlighting the importance of preschool education and the role parents and community can play in helping to increase student achievement in primary schools.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

In just the first year, the project produced 80 of the benchmark 108 IRI audio programs for kindergarten students, along with supplementary materials to further enhance the learning process. All of the lessons were completed during 2004.

In addition, 64 pilot centers—emphasizing community-based preschool programs—were established during 2004. Each center is staffed with its own community educator.

During 2005 the current preschool lessons will be converted to a radio format, with 12 commercial radio stations pledging to broadcast the program free of charge once it is ready for dissemination.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING (CETT)

Implemented in Honduras by Universidad Pedagógica Nacional

Dates: October 2002 to September 2008¹⁰

Funding: \$8,497,683 (to date)



CETT teacher training board displaying trainer profile.

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Educational achievement indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) compare poorly with the world's other regions. In some LAC countries, fewer than 60 percent of children who start school reach the fifth grade, and illiteracy rates remain high. These educational gaps limit the personal, civic, and economic potential of children and the communities in which they live. On a regional level, the economic competitiveness of Latin America and the Caribbean is severely constrained.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

In view of these regional challenges, President Bush announced a White House initiative at the Summit of the Americas in 2001 to establish three teacher training centers (in Central America and the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and the Andean region of South America) to improve reading instruction in the early primary grades. The Central American and Dominican Republic (CADR) CETT is led by a consortium of partners in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador,

Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua. An estimated 15,000 teachers, 500,000 students, and thousands of schools will have benefited by 2006.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal of the initiative is to reduce the high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement in the region by improving reading instruction in grades 1–3. CETT activities are intended to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers and administrators in the region and to enrich early classroom instruction so that students gain competence in reading and writing. To address equity concerns, special emphasis is placed on disadvantaged communities and rural areas.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

There are five major CETT program components: 1) teacher training, 2) creation of teaching and learning materials, 3) production of assessment and diagnostic tools, 4) applied research, and 5) information and communication technology. Partner institutions in each country (except Nicaragua) are responsible for developing a specific program component,

¹⁰ Anticipated completion date.

with materials, methodologies, and best practices shared across the consortium within the Central American context. The Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (the National Pedagogical University in

Honduras) is serving as the lead institution for the CADR CETT consortium.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN HONDURAS?

CETT has trained 52 trainers, 1,610 in-service teachers, 100 pre-service teachers, 95 school administrators and principals, and 15 Ministry of Education personnel. New classroom materials will be completed for grades 1, 2, and 3 by the end of 2005.

An evaluation completed by an independent firm, Aguirre International, shows promising results for reading comprehension and writing skills in the CETT pilot schools. Evaluation instruments have been proposed, and a consensus will be reached on the final design of the instruments by the end of 2005.

In addition, important private sector alliances have been made with two companies: Scholastic Books, Inc., to provide libraries for schools at significantly reduced prices; and Sesame Workshop, to help develop instructional materials using the Sesame Street methodology.

PART 3

IMPACTS, LESSONS, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

IMPACT OF USAID EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

USAID has had significant impact on the education sector over the past five years, particularly in the geographic areas where USAID focuses its activities. The number of children in schools affected by USAID basic education programs (an Agency-wide performance indicator) in 2004 was 735,000. More than 1.2 million Honduran children will benefit from USAID programs during 2005. Major achievements and results are summarized below.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION DELIVERY SYSTEMS

The EDUCATODOS project has succeeded spectacularly in meeting its objectives. An extensive service network has been developed in 13 of Honduras' 18 departments, and more than 100,000 out-of-school youth and adults enroll in the program annually. The program is known and respected

throughout Honduras and involves thousands of volunteer facilitators who help build literacy skills and increase the levels of basic education in their communities. EDUCATODOS has established a growing number of agreements with local municipalities and private industry. The existence of these agreements and the potential for many more bode well for the future sustainability of the program.

The annual number of grade levels successfully passed by students in EDUCATODOS more than doubled—from 43,000 in 1996 to 95,000 in 2004. In terms of cumulative coverage, EDUCATODOS has increased the educational level of low-income individuals in Honduras by 450,000 person years of schooling since the project's inception in 1995, with anticipated increases in the incomes of low-income people of more than \$400 million. In 1998, the UNESCO Literacy Program named EDUCATODOS one of the three best literacy programs in the world.

Honduran students engaged in classroom activity.





Teacher interacting with students during classroom lesson.

INCREASED ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION THROUGH INTERACTIVE RADIO INSTRUCTION

Though the alternative preschool program is still in its early stages, it is anticipated that the program will play an important role in helping Honduras achieve the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) goal of providing one year of quality preschool education for all children.

POLICY REFORM REDEFINES THE HONDURAS EDUCATION SYSTEM

As a result of USAID assistance to the Ministry of Education (MOE) in redefining learning standards based on a new curriculum, teachers will share the same criteria for evaluating students, standardized tests will incorporate these same standards, and student failure rates will be reduced.

Supporting the MOE in decentralizing this highly successful alternative basic education program, EDUCATODOS, will help ensure the sustainability of the program and reduce costs.

With a new program of study at the high school level, it is anticipated that EDUCATODOS will play an important role in achieving the PRS goal of 50 percent of Honduran youth completing secondary education.

LESSONS LEARNED/ BEST PRACTICES

1. Volunteerism plays an essential role in an alternative education delivery system such as EDUCATODOS, which, unlike traditional schools, does not rely on a paid workforce. Volunteers, including the young people coming through the program who then frequently become facilitators of future programs, serve as role models for other members in the community. Not only do participants benefit from their involvement with EDUCATODOS, but the program also had a deep impact on the facilitators, who gain knowledge and leadership skills through their actions.

2. The mixed-mode distribution system of EDUCATODOS is effective. The project uses two types of audio material: broadcast radio and cassettes. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these systems. Not only is broadcast radio cost-effective, but it also is a useful way to deliver daily lessons to remote areas. Radio broadcast schedules are tailored to the best time slots for each area. The disadvantage is that groups cannot proceed at their own pace, and it usually is not possible to deliver all grade levels to all areas at the same time. Distributing lessons on cassette has the advantage of enabling groups to schedule classes at the time that best suits participants—whether or not that conforms to the broadcast schedule. This is a critical need for workplace-based programs, since

workers in urban areas work later than those in rural areas.

3. Management structures and models must evolve. The Ministry of Education was highly centralized in 1995 when EDUCATODOS began. The program developed a hybrid management structure that was centralized in some aspects to complement the MOE's, and decentralized in others for local monitoring purposes. Now that the MOE is decentralizing, EDUCATODOS will do the same, reducing its centralized staff significantly.

4. Certain teaching practices and materials improve student achievement and reduce repetition rates. The most important factors are 1) use of active-participatory pedagogy in the classroom, 2) motivation of students by the teacher, 3) effective use of MOE textbooks, 4) curriculum calendars to help teachers plan their lessons and cover the entire curriculum during the school year, 5) monthly progress tests, and 6) constant monitoring of student progress by teachers and parents.

5. Parental participation is critical. Mothers' and fathers' participation in school activities is a significant factor contributing to both lower student repetition and higher student achievement in both math and Spanish, across each of the first three grades of primary school.

6. The role of teachers and school directors is also decisive. Experience has shown that 1) the best teachers should be

assigned to the early grades, 2) incentives should be given for teachers and directors to live in/near the school community, 3) teachers should not be transferred during the school year, and 4) schools and teachers should comply with the official MOE school calendar and observe the full 200 school days established by the Ministry.

7. Private sector participation in education is essential. When USAID support for the interactive radio mathematics program ended in 2004, the private sector made this program sustainable by providing 85 percent of the funding for the recurrent costs of the program with donated broadcasting time on commercial radio stations, workbooks for children, and basic school supplies. This reduces the MOE's funding to only 15 percent of the recurrent costs for the program, a crucial threshold in a developing country such as Honduras where funding for education is limited.

8. Catastrophe can create opportunity for reform. Following Hurricane Mitch, important work was done to lay the groundwork for comprehensive educational policy reform in Honduras. USAID played a pivotal role in helping create a consensus in favor of reform, supporting the planning and public discussion of reform plans, and supporting the reforms through effective donor coordination. The Mission also supported several pilot projects—two of which use distance learning—to provide inputs to the anticipated reform program. A national education



Girls enjoy learning together in EDUCATODOS.

reform effort with effective donor cooperation and coordination has now been launched.

EDUCATION SECTOR PROSPECTS IN HONDURAS

President Ricardo Maduro's administration (2002–2005) identified education as a key priority for Honduras. As a framework for its actions and policies, the MOE developed a government Education Development Plan. The plan emphasizes 1) modernizing the education system's structure, 2) improving coverage, relevance, and quality of education, 3) strengthening community participation and education decentralization, 4) promoting efficiency in higher education, and 5) supporting innovation in the nonformal education sector.

Faced with myriad challenges, the Honduran government made a commitment to improve education and meet PRS and EFA-FTI goals. This requires improving the management of the education sector; expanding access and improving educational quality and efficiency; involving civil society through community organizations and decentralization; and expanding alternative basic and vocational education opportunities to respond to private sector needs.

Clearly, poverty will not be reduced in Honduras without substantial improvement in the quality of its human

resource base. To develop a better educated workforce, Honduras must make more effective investments to improve the quality, efficiency, and equity of education and to increase access to preschool and postprimary education, especially in rural and marginal urban areas. With increased educational and skill levels, the current and future workforce will have greater opportunities for increased employment and higher incomes.

To become more competitive in the global economy, Honduras is challenged both to substantially increase its investments in basic education and to better manage those investments. The country's anticipated debt relief¹¹ offers an opportunity to make the systemic improvements needed to transform social sector services and increase transparency. USAID's development of effective partnerships—with the Honduran government, other donors, and the public and private sectors—will promote “education for all” in a way that will improve education quality and access nationwide and foster the development of an educated, productive, and competitive society.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR USAID/HONDURAS

Under the 2003–2009 Country Strategy, USAID/Honduras has begun shifting its primary emphasis from education service delivery to broader support for policy reform. Activities will be targeted at closing critical gaps in edu-

¹¹ Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, Honduras hopes to obtain larger debt relief disbursements in 2005, which will amount to about \$1 billion through 2015. As outlined in Honduras' PRS, these resources will be used to fund a set of social and structural reforms designed to promote human capital development and social protection, especially through better education and health.

education access and quality, achieving EFA-FTI and PRS goals, and developing a more coherent workforce development strategy. The mission will also actively support the Honduran government's decentralization process and its planned devolution of social service management to local levels, thus contributing to greater responsiveness, accountability, and transparency in the education sector.

By the end of the current strategy period in 2009, the Honduran basic and workforce development systems will be more capable of meeting the country's needs for a better educated and skilled workforce to meet evolving private sector demands for qualified workers. This will help make Honduras more competitive and attractive for potential investors. Both traditional and alternative education programs—as well as workforce development programs—will be more efficient and financially sustainable, providing increased access to education and skills training.

The MOE has made a commitment to continue and expand the successful “Save the First Cycle,” “Let's Learn Math,” and interactive radio preschool programs by using Honduran government resources, World Bank loan funds, and private sector resources under EFA-FTI. USAID funding for the recurrent costs and expansion of EDUCATODOS is beginning to decline, as the MOE increases its funding share. USAID will soon phase out operational support for vocational

education and consider options for increasing policy support and technical assistance for systemic reform. The Mission will continue to support policy reform efforts on decentralization and begin supporting other areas, such as the development of education standards and improved testing/evaluation systems.

Program performance will be measured both by Central America and Mexico Regional Strategy indicators and by mission-level indicators.¹² Specifically, USAID anticipates Honduran government progress in the following areas under USAID's Country Strategy:

- Improved access, quality, and efficiency of basic education.
- An increase and greater efficiency in expenditures (including procurement processes) by the MOE.
- An increase in and more effective decentralized investments in education.
- An increase in private sector alliances.
- An increase in community involvement in education.
- A greater number of innovative approaches being applied to increase and improve educational opportunities.

Preschoolers learn through hands-on activities.



¹² Some of the proposed indicators for measuring progress under the regional and Honduran USAID strategies include 1) primary education completion rates, 2) public expenditures on primary education as a percentage of gross domestic product, 3) student flow rates from the first grade through secondary education, 4) first grade student failure rates (repetition and dropout), 5) increased academic achievement, and 6) increased enrollments for grades 7-9.

SUGGESTED READING

For more on the EDUCATODOS: Alternative Basic Education Project, see the following reports and Web site. Publications with USAID Document numbers can be found at www.dec.org:

- EDUCATODOS home page (www.educatodos.hn). Web site includes numerous studies completed under EDUCATODOS for the Ministry of Education and other groups, including a study on changes in the Honduran workforce, studies related to primary education issues, a summary of studies and findings, evaluations and sector reports during 1984-1999, and technical papers related to EDUCATODOS).
- *Impacto de EDUCATODOS en la Producción y en las Condiciones de Vida de los Participantes* (del Cid, Adolfo. 2002. American Institutes for Research. USAID Document PN-ACR-837).
- *La Propuesta Curricular de EDUCATODOS: Volumen I* (Molina, Jose Espinal, and others. 2002. American Institutes for Research. USAID Document PN-ACS-243).
- *IEQ Case Study: Developing an Alternative Program for a Growing Out-of-School Population* (Siri, Carmen, and others. March 2002. IEQ-II/USAID/EGAT. USAID Document PN-ACT-775).
- *Evaluation to Support Learning: The Evaluation Process of the Seventh to Ninth Grade (Third Cycle) of EDUCATODOS* (American Institutes for Research. USAID Document PN-ACR-840).

For more on the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative, see the following Web site:

- Ministry of Education's EFA FTI home page (www.se.gob.hn/index.php?a=Webpage&url=EFA_home).

For more on PREPI: Interactive Radio Instruction-Based Preschool Project, see the following Web site:

- Ministry of Education's EFA-FTI home page (www.se.gob.hn/index.php?a=Webpage&url=EFA_home).

For more on the MIDEH: Measuring Student Achievement Project, see the following Web site:

- MIDEH project overview (www.equip123.net/equip2/mideh/default.htm)

For more on the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training, see the following report and Web site:

- *Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT): A Summit of the Americas Initiative - Information Packet* (Creative Associates International Inc. 2003. USAID Document number PN-ACY-696. www.dec.org).
- www.readingforallchildren.org/index.php/highlights
- www.readingforallchildren.org/index.php/newsroom
- www.readingforallchildren.org/index.php/faqs

For more on other USAID projects in Honduras, see the following reports and Web sites:

- USAID/Honduras home page (www.usaid.gov.hn).
- USAID activities in Honduras in response to Hurricane Mitch (www.usaid.gov/hn/hurricane.htm).
- CADERH home page (www.caderh.hn/index.asp).
- FEREMA overview of APREMAT (www.ferema.org/pag/publicaciones.asp).
- Congressional Budget Justification USAID/Honduras FY 2005 (www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/hn.htm).
- *Mission Accomplished: The United States Completes a \$1 Billion Hurricane Relief and Reconstruction Program in Central America and the Caribbean* (USAID. 2003. Document Number PN-ACQ-999. www.dec.org).
- *Lecciones Aprendidas: Reprobación y Rendimiento Académico en el Primer Ciclo* (van Steenwyk, Ned. 2003. www.educatodos.hn/docum/investiga/nedsteenwyk/leccionaprendidas.pdf).

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