

## Education in Honduras An Introduction

Under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations declared that “Everyone has the right to education.”<sup>1</sup> In developed countries, this right is easily afforded to citizens. However, in many developing countries such as Honduras, it remains a challenge to access quality education. Almost 25% of Honduran children do not receive education in any capacity,<sup>2</sup> and this is in large part due to factors such as location, funding, and lack of government support.

In order to provide some background on the Honduran education system, it can be thought of as relatively similar to that in the United States. From ages seven to thirteen, students attend primary school. This education is free, and is the only time education is compulsory in Honduras. After primary school, students can attend secondary *ciclo común*, or general high school.<sup>3</sup> This lasts for three years, until the student turns fifteen--at which time they can choose to pursue academic or vocational secondary education. Finally, if students complete their secondary education, at age eighteen they might go on to attend one of the eleven universities in Honduras.<sup>4</sup>

While education is mandatory for children ages seven to thirteen, it is often impossible for students to attend school. In 2010, the Honduran Commission of Human Rights found that around 220,000 people in Honduras (about ten percent of the population between the ages of five and seventeen) did not have access to education.<sup>5</sup> 75.3 percent of these people lived in rural areas.<sup>6</sup> What’s more, less than 32 percent of students who are able to attend primary school actually graduate without repeating one or more grades.<sup>7</sup> This is because many of the children who do have a primary school in their area must walk for several hours each way to attend school. Under these conditions, it can be difficult for students to attend school every single school day, and practically impossible for them to keep up with curriculum. Although 90 percent of students enroll in primary school, more than half of them drop out before graduating, and only one third of those who do make it through primary school attend secondary school.<sup>8</sup> This is in large part due to the fact that secondary schools are only located in cities. In addition, students who graduate secondary school with hopes of attending college must move to one of the three cities in which Honduras's universities are located: Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula or Comayagüela.<sup>9</sup>

For students who do have access to education, the public school system is not guaranteed to give them a consistent and structured education. The government is never up to date with teachers’ paychecks. In response, the teacher’s union often declares strike and suspends classes because they

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<sup>1</sup> "United Nations. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Action for Education | Home." Action4Education. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.action4education.org/why-education>.

<sup>3</sup> "Education System in Honduras." Classbase. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.classbase.com/Countries/Honduras/Education-System>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Cotza, Lorena. "Improving education standards in Honduras: A long road ahead." The Guardian. June 10, 2013. Accessed February 21, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/jun/06/education-standards-honduras>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Education System in Honduras." Classbase. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.classbase.com/Countries/Honduras/Education-System>.

<sup>8</sup> "Honduras - Educational System-overview." StateUniversity.com. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/607/Honduras-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "Education System in Honduras." Classbase. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.classbase.com/Countries/Honduras/Education-System>.

refuse to recognize the government's education policies until they are paid.<sup>10</sup> During these times, even students who have a school near them don't have teachers to keep it open. Although the government regulates the curriculum, syllabi, and textbooks of all schools in the country,<sup>11</sup> most schools do not have funding to buy all the materials they need.<sup>12</sup> Often, that responsibility falls to parents and members of the community who are not necessarily equipped to handle that responsibility. Unfortunately, private schools are not much better. Many families see private schools as a symbol of social class, and will pay to send their children there rather than to a public school.<sup>13</sup> However, in Honduras, private schools are often institutions set out to make money, and the quality of education can be even worse than that of a public school's.

Action for Education is working directly with rural community leaders within Honduras to break down some of these hurdles and make education more accessible to everyone. AcE's first project, the Juan Orlando Hernandez Public School in San Pedro Sula, has over 350 students enrolled in expense-free primary and secondary education. AcE is now partnered with an established public nursing school, and is working to expand their existing program to Trinidad, a nearby town with few career building opportunities. AcE also works to provide proper educational materials for the schools, and scholarships to students who wish to attend. Though these and future projects, Action for Education aims to bring quality primary, secondary, and technical education to more people, while avoiding the issues associated with Honduran for-profit private institutions.

It is too difficult for people in developing countries to access the basic human right of education. Action for Education is trying to fix that by finding solutions to Honduras's current schooling problems, through the creation of educational opportunities in rural communities that will promote long-term sustainable development.

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<sup>10</sup> Rius, Jorge Gallardo. "The Education Crisis in Honduras." Honduras Weekly. January 18, 2010. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.hondurasweekly.com/editorial/item/10206-the-education-crisis-in-honduras>.

<sup>11</sup> "Honduras - Educational System-overview." StateUniversity.com. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/607/Honduras-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Cotza, Lorena. "Improving education standards in Honduras: A long road ahead." The Guardian. June 10, 2013. Accessed February 21, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/jun/06/education-standards-honduras>.

<sup>13</sup> "Honduras - Educational System-overview." StateUniversity.com. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/607/Honduras-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html>.