

## LATEST NEWS FROM OUR HONDURAS PROGRAMME – SEPTEMBER 2021

We are happy to report that all the boys and girls in our Honduran education programme remain happy, healthy and in school.

However, for the majority of children in Honduras they are not so fortunate. Schools in the Latin America and the Caribbean region have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 158 days of full school closures on average. These closures have deprived the children of potential life-saving interventions, such as school feeding. Lockdowns and curfews have increased safety threats in the home and local area, particularly for women and girls.

The country has also been ravaged by the economic catastrophe caused by lengthy lock-downs. In regions where children were already disproportionately hit by poverty and inequalities, the pandemic has further undermined their fate. The forecast unemployment and income losses are expected to greatly impact the large informal job sector upon which poor Honduran families rely for their menial income. Children of these families are the focus of our work.



*Families donate food from their farms*

Despite so many challenges, including soaring prices in food and essential goods, our partners, the Sisters of Mary have successfully maintained the education programme. Local companies and the families of the children have been generously

helping with food and sanitary donations where they can which has been a tremendous help to an ever-increasing stretched budget.

At the current time face-to-face teaching has not been able to resume. Some of the teachers live in the school so have been able to take lessons but most of the classes are still being delivered virtually.

The Sisters have worked hard to ensure that the children are as active as possible outside of their classwork. Both schools have busy sports and artistic programmes and take part in many competitions to keep their motivation levels up.



*A locally-based branch of Nivea donate free sanitary products*



*Girls enjoying soccer, Tegucigalpa*



*Delighted student with his new school-bag*

We were thrilled to welcome 183 girls and 194 boys to our schools in Tegucigalpa and Amarateca respectively. Despite being malnourished and behind with their studies, they have all settled in well to their new school-life and making the most of the opportunity they have been given.

All of these children can from the most impoverished backgrounds imaginable with their families and communities plunged into deeper poverty due to the pandemic. Some of the stories of their life before joining the schools are harrowing. Stories such as Edwin's:

### Edwin's story



"My name is Edwin and I am 12 years old. I have a twin called Cleofe and two other younger brothers. My parents are simple farmers who till the soil for us in order to survive.

"In 2019, I tried to migrate to the United States with my father, hoping for a brighter future for my family, but it ended in despair. My mother, my twin and two other younger brothers stayed at home, and prayed for our safety.

"During the journey, I saw and experienced many difficulties; the shortage of money, hunger, tiredness, lack of shelter and many others. I feared for our safety too because some people had guns and rifles; I thought it would be the end of my life.

"When we reached the border of Mexico and the US, we traveled across the Rio Bravo by night in a plastic boat. After crossing the river, while walking, soldiers captured and brought us to prison. We were in one cell with many other migrants. The next day, they sent us back to Honduras by bus and we returned home to my family. This migration experience took 22 days.

"During my travels, I was informed that my twin, Cleofe, had passed the examination to join the Sisters of Mary school in Amarateca and that I would have to be parted from him.

"I worked together with my father over the last difficult year since he couldn't afford to send me to school. I was working in the field, planting vegetables, harvesting and cleaning. I so wanted to be with my twin at school.

"Earlier this year that dream came true and I am now in Grade 7 and Cleofe is in Grade 8 – I need to catch up on all my missed studies to I can join his class.

"After my five years of education at the school I want to continue my studies in college. I want to be a mechanical engineer because I'm interested in cars and I want to have my own company someday. I thank God every day for all the people who have helped me reach my dream.

After my traumatic experience of trying to migrate with my father, I hope that I can be a professional and be able to travel safe and sound and lift my poor family out of poverty."



*Edwin (left) with his twin Cleofe*