

# Village Updates November 2010



## Leaders for a Nation

Every 88 minutes in Honduras a teenage boy or girl in our target population is murdered!



Boys and girls of promise, just like Maria pictured above in 2004 outside our old center, are gunned down by gangs every day. Poverty and apathy are just as deadly at taking out potential leaders. Our task is keeping these kids alive and growing in their potential.

In July, Maria was the one chosen to face down the abusive bus driver and be the sole witness to testify in the trial against him on behalf of the teens from our center. You can read about it at [www.wrgnews.com](http://www.wrgnews.com) or snail/email me at the address below for a copy of that newsletter.

Identified as a potential leader when we first met her back in 2004, Maria was a bit shy, but her intelligence and forthrightness were noteworthy. Extra attention was given to Maria from the get-go, and since that time we have watched her blossom into a very confident and

capable young woman.

Contrast Maria with a teen we will call Juan for the purpose of this newsletter. Juan signed on at our center the day the doors opened in 2003. He was from one of the most wretchedly poor families in all of Linaca. But Juan had leadership potential and faithfully attended our center.

Joining the group of teens that were serious about being mentored, Juan excelled at the tasks we gave him. When the wife of a U.S. Congressman came to visit us back in 2005, Juan was the one who captured her heart. Due to our center's tutoring program, he was improving his performance in school.

Because of Juan's example and enthusiasm for our center, his little brothers (who had been disinclined to attend school) enrolled and followed in his footsteps. The five children in the family were quite malnourished. All were fed at our center. When they needed medical attention it was our staff that saw to it they received care.

When it came time for Juan to graduate from 8<sup>th</sup> grade, he suddenly stopped going to the center. Our staff went to visit the family and learned that a mere \$14 stood between Juan and his diploma. The \$14 "Chair Tax" is a mandatory fee for all children to graduate 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Supposedly it goes to buying new equipment for the school – the likes of which no one has ever seen...

The next morning the chair tax was paid in the nick of time and Juan proudly graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade - something no one in his family had accomplished.

Unfortunately, the next year Juan's family was sorely pressed for income and he began to lose interest in going to school. He dropped out and went to work. Following in his footsteps, the rest of the boys in the family also dropped out of school. Even though school is mandatory for the younger ones, it is just another ignored law in Honduras.

This past year Juan took a job with nefarious bus company that abused our teens. He became the driver's assistant on one of the routes. As the trial date drew near, tensions heightened for the bus company.

It became apparent that the driver stood a very good chance of losing against us in court. Even though there was no basis in fact, the bus company's lawyer decided to countersue our center director in hopes of getting us to drop our suit against the driver.

The usual witnesses rounded up to bear false testimony against us did not live up to their assigned roles. Surprisingly, each witness the bus company called refused to lie when taking the stand.

The saddest moment in the trial was when Juan took the stand against us. In order to keep his job and the meager wages he earned, Juan was called to testify against the most helpful people in the life of his family over the past seven years.

The villagers and teens from our center begged Juan not to testify – and if he did – not to lie. His sister had returned to the center a few months preceding the bus fiasco and was flourishing once again. Understandably, she was embarrassed at this turn of events.

Unfortunately, Juan took the stand and spoke what he thought the bus company wanted him to say. Our lawyer astutely asked Juan one question that totally invalidated his testimony as an impartial witness. His statements were summarily thrown out and we won the case.

But both trials cost us dearly in terms of financial and human capital... resources and people we could have used to help more children were hijacked by these amoral people.

While the trial was a victory for us, we were all saddened that Juan, who should have been in high school and on a leadership track with the rest of our group, turned away from the truth.



But for a bowl of soup, Juan sold his inheritance to the abusers.

While not as horrific as joining a gang or a cartel, we lost a child of promise. This is not uncommon among the disenfranchised. One can only wonder at the number of children in gangs and in the bean fields who to this day hold the promise we saw in Juan.

A leader is a leader - we have learned – for good or for ill. So what is the solution for children like Juan who are desperate for survival or lose interest in school but have leadership potential?

That is the question that we wrestle with today. We are looking for ways to keep these young people engaged and active with our center through vocational workshops and the like. This will take investment on the part of local leaders, businessmen, and funding to back any new projects.

Gangs and drug lords are recruiting innocent children to do their bidding every day. They use the same methodology we do, reaching out to all-but-abandoned youth.

For very little financial investment in the children's lives, the cartels promise these kids the world and deliver death. By contrast, for very little financial investment, we promise these kids hope that delivers life. Although, our students must earn their future rather than stealing or dealing their way into it.

One advantage we have over the cartels is that we are able to begin a positive influence on kids from the age of five – when most are under the auspices of some type of familial authority. Gangs typically don't have free access to children that young. Another advantage we possess is that parents in the villages are terrified at what they see drugs do to their children.

In the years between five and twelve, if we do our job right, most of the children we influence will have a solid self esteem. They will also possess the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual tools to aid them in resisting

the lure of evil bent on destroying them.

Our largest class of teens yet will be graduating from High School next year. Over the past seven years we have lost children to the bean fields, but so far none have succumbed to gang influence. And miraculously, not one of our teen girls has gotten pregnant!

Because our zone of influence is limited to only a few hours a day, it is ever more critical that we keep as many teens as possible in school and in the center as role models for the younger ones.

Statistically children are more likely to be influenced by those only a few years their senior. An even greater advantage is gained when older siblings and teen neighbors can continue their influence on the kids in their homes. Remember when you were 12 and thought 16-year-olds were the coolest beings on the planet?

When we began working with the children in 2003, not one could name a role model or a person they aspired to be. Now many of the preteens and teenagers are watching their peers graduate.

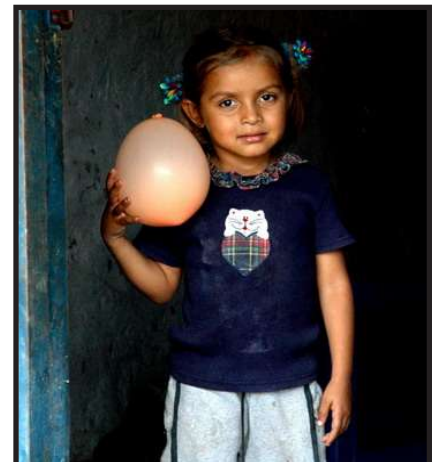
The same little children that had no role models in 2003 are the leaders of our center today. Many aspire to go to college, while continuing to work with our youth. We sponsor three who are on this track now, attending college weekends.

Case in point is Fatima, *pictured above at our old center and at home with her family in 2003*. Today, she has graduated from High School and is enrolling in college. Every one of the siblings and cousins pictured here faithfully attend our center because of her influence.

One of her best friends, Isback, also graduated, enrolled in college and has joined our staff as a mentor. The girls are pictured above in early 2007 when they were just entering the training program for teen leaders.

You can pick leaders out of a crowd at a very

early age. They are the ones directing traffic on the playground. Where they are, the rest of the group falls in behind. Out of 100 kids at our center there will be ten with leadership ability and influence over the remaining 90. Out of the top ten leaders one will emerge as commander and chief over the entire group.



I will never forget three year old Scarlett (*pictured above at age three and today*) who was in a dither one day because the older children on the playground were monkeying around in a manner she found distressingly dangerous. Ordering everyone off the playground equipment, she was not content that they were moving fast enough, and ran to get an adult to stop them.

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Several years later Scarlett won a competition and was crowned queen of the wildly popular Corn Festival in Danli that attracts people from all over Honduras each year.

When I mistakenly congratulated Scarlett on her victory as Princess, she soundly corrected me with her proper title of Queen! Scarlett graduated first in her class last year.

Diligently attending our center, concentrating on her homework and exceptional abilities in dance, Little Miss Scarlett is a force to be reckoned with in the years to come.

While we have a great deal of hope for the children who remain steadfast in attending school and our center, we are ever pondering ways of keeping young teens like Juan from leaving the path of promise.

While the bus crisis was a huge thorn in our side, we found a rose attached to it at the end that might be an answer for the Juans in our center. When the bus company began to threaten us, the American Ambassador, concerned for our safety, called the Mayor in Danli to put him on point.

The Mayor, not only helped us with this incident, but took the time to learn what we do and who our teens are. Very impressed at the number of responsible teens that attend



the center and volunteer their services, the Mayor is eager to give our group some projects that he would like to see implemented in the region.

The Honduran Foreign Minister and his wife are also very good friends of the work. They recently offered us office space in the Chancellery to work on projects together. They also have plans underway for a commissioning ceremony that would recognize our mentors and teens as ambassadors at large in Honduras through the office of the Foreign Minister.

Our kids must have 100% compliance in their volunteer responsibilities to qualify for scholarship aid. Each teen donates 10 hours a week (although some do a lot more), mostly tutoring the younger children of the center.

Those teens who are not interested in working with children have the option of doing center maintenance, social projects in the village, or working with community leaders in whatever capacity is needed.

Our teens are the perfect answer for any projects the leaders of their country want to implement with volunteer labor.

With 75 teens at their leaders' beck and call, imagine what 750 hours of volunteer labor a week could do for a region?

Our investment these past seven years in the children has created human capital.

Human capital makes or breaks a society. We create solid citizens with a good work ethic and a moral framework not seen in most places in Honduras.

Our students would be ideal candidates for job positions in the villages and in the nearby cities. Contacts with the leaders in government could help the teens obtain employment in the future.

We believe the leadership our teens exemplify will inspire new ways of thinking and enterprise that will spill over into all segments of society.

Our dream has always been to see the privileged join hands with the disenfranchised. In an atmosphere of mutual respect and love, together they will build a better, more just society for all.

## NEEDS AND CHALLENGES AND MATTERS FOR PRAYER

### ANOTHER MATCHING GRANT FOR THE CHILDREN AND TEENS!

A generous partner has put up a \$5,000 a matching grant for the children's center. It is critical to match this gift to enable us to purchase uniforms, books, school supplies, school shoes, and everything needed for the hundreds of children we serve in the two valleys. The 2011 school year begins at the end of February. Last year we spent a little over \$10,000 on supplies that allowed well over 500 students who would not have attended school to enroll.

### TEEN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2011

In 2011 we are looking for individual or corporate sponsorships, stateside and in Honduras, to scholarship 75 teens to attend High School from both valleys we serve. Sponsorship for a teen is \$50 a month – this provides transportation, uniforms, all fees, internships, special classes, field trips, lunch allowance, and any other expenses needed during the year. If you know of any company that is interested in being a corporate donor, please contact us!

In exchange for this scholarship all students work 10 hours a week on social projects in and around the Linaca and Jamastran valleys we serve. Beginning next year they will provide volunteer services in the valleys we serve, the city of Danli and beyond.

We believe the teens hard work and example will inspire younger and older generations alike to give back of their time and talents.

### FUNDING NEEDS FOR YEAR END 2010 AND START 2011

In the next months our need for the overall work is \$25,000. This will pay operating expenses for our children's center through the end of 2010 and start 2011. Additionally, the funds will secure all the proper legal fees and licensing for the bus to transport twice the number students to High School than we did last year.

These funds will also help cover the trial expenses we have incurred from our dealings with the bus company. The trial in Danli was only a preliminary trial. A follow-up trial will be held in the Capital of Tegucigalpa in the future - all part of the complex Honduran legal system.

### DESIGNATED GIVING GOES 100% WHERE SPECIFIED

World Resources Group is rather unique among non-profit organizations. Any specified donation to the children will go 100% to the fund you designate.

We take no percentages for administrative costs, which are raised separately from the children's work.

All undesignated giving will be used where the Board of Directors determines the need to be the greatest.

World Resources Group donations are tax deductible. We thank all our partners and friends for your support, helping us make 2010 one of the most productive years ever!