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Honduras: A Closer Look at the Truth Behind Education

Across the world, there are countries that kids never learn about, and people never pay attention to. Honduras tends to be one of them, as it is not necessarily a large world power. Honduras is a small Central American country that borders Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador on the coast of the North Pacific Ocean. Honduras has a population of roughly 9,235,240 people, with a land area of approximately 112,090 square kilometers. The capital city of Honduras is Tegucigalpa, located toward the southwest portion of the country (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). Honduras is a country with a high farming population of 16% (Nations Encyclopedia, 2020). However, Honduras is currently experiencing a large amount of conflict that interferes with the country being capable of providing food and proper education to its people. The country experiences issues such as high crime rates, immigration rates as high as 28,070 per year (Macrotrends, 2020), and lack of employment. The number of homicides in 2019 in Honduras was approximately 777 people, with as many homicides as nine per day (Insight Crime, 2019). The current unemployment rate in Honduras is relatively 7.5% (Statista, 2019). These detrimental and heartbreaking statistics have negative effects on society, and they interfere with the ability for children to receive a proper education. The students in Honduras are receiving free education only through the sixth grade, often in one to two room schoolhouses, at best. These schools typically only have one or two teachers for all six grades, who are often unpaid (Honduras Good Works, 2019). Honduran children are being deprived of the education that is vital for their futures, something that many of us have been lucky enough to have but take for granted.

To gain a better understanding of the education situation in Honduras, facts about the economy, daily life of citizens, and environment of the country are important to know. The size of a typical family in Honduras is about four people (ArcGIS, 2019). A common meal that an average family would enjoy would consist of fried plantains, corn tortillas, eggs, and occasionally meat from their chickens, if they can afford to lose one. Many families cannot afford nutritious vegetables, and when they can, they are at times not available at markets (Honduras Child Alliance, 2019). The families in Honduras typically enjoy tortillas in every meal that they prepare themselves, which they commonly make from affordable ingredients such as corn (Peace Corps, 2004). Aside from food shortage, Honduran housing is another difficult issue, as 1.1 million people are deprived of sufficient housing. More than 702,000 homes are in grave need of repair, and 24% of Honduran homes have dirt floors. Additionally, 11.5% of homes do not have access to running water (Habitat for Humanity, 2020), and 23% of typical families in Honduras do not have access to clean drinking water (Humanium, 2012). 50% of all households do not have any electricity (Habitat for Humanity, 2018).

The current minimum wage in Honduras is around \$6,000.00 per year (U.S. dollars) (World Minimum Wage Rates, 2020). The three most commonly occupied jobs in Honduras include 14.2% agriculture, 20.9% industry, and 39.8% services. Around 90% of the population has access to some form of health care, but it is significantly harder for families living in rural parts of the country to have access to any health care at all. However, while people in other parts of the country have access to health care, it is not very affordable, and if it is, it is not good quality (Borgen Project, 2018). In rural areas, roads are

typically made of mud and dirt. In the more inner-city parts, paved roads are more common. Also, families do have access to local markets, but they often cannot afford many of the products that they have to offer. What seems to happen is that people do not get the proper education that they need to be successful, and that leads to them not being able to get a steady job. Not having a steady, well-paying job means that these families are struggling forever in these conditions.

While all of the above facts are issues that Honduras faces, lack of education is a major issue in the small country. Currently, 76.2% of Honduras's population is being educated (Nation Master, 2012). Education availability in Honduras is increasing, but very slowly. Education in Honduras is still not favorable, but many organizations are working to change that and better the education system. The main contribution to the lack of education in Honduras is their poverty level. The public cannot afford to provide free schooling, which is caused by people not being educated and not being able to better the economy. It is a vicious cycle, and it starts with the lack of education. Rural populations are typically not affected by the lack of education, but urban populations tend to suffer more. The income of rural populations typically depends mainly on the farming conditions for that year. However, for urban populations, income depends more on people being able to fill positions in big companies. With no education, people cannot serve in government positions or work for large corporations. Honduras is a rare case when it comes to distribution of education between males and females. In Honduras, the percentage of girls receiving education is 53%, and the percentage of boys receiving education is 46% (OECD, 2016). With people in Honduras not receiving proper education, it is harder for the elderly to live. In the United States, the elderly's children normally care for them in their old ages, while in Honduras, with the large percent in poverty, some typically cannot afford it. Children are mainly affected by not receiving a proper education. While the majority of children in Honduras receive some form of an education, it is often not a good one. Since the main population of Honduras is not receiving the education that they need, the refugees coming in that may not even be citizens are not either. Minorities in Honduras are still acquiring education, about the same as others. While Honduras may not have the best education system, they are inclusive about who gets to have some form of an education.

The overall lack of proper education that these children are receiving is very severe, mainly because with many lacking proper education, it can stop the country from being as successful. Honduras is currently ranked in the bottom 71% of 130 economies, which can be easily traced back to the lack of proper education (The Dialogue). Honduras shows to have the least effective education program in the Central American region. In 2015, approximately 12% of the adult population in Honduras (15 and older) were unable to read and write. In 2017, it was recorded that 31.6% of the population was earning less than \$3.20 per day. The lack of education that the people of Honduras are receiving is having a steady, negative impact on the economy. If the people of Honduras had received a better education, then more people could work higher-paying jobs, which would lower the poverty line and greatly improve the economy. 26.9% of the country is below the poverty line, and only 34% of the population completes primary schooling with only 8% moving on to attend college (Country Studies, US 1995). Because of people not being able to get jobs due to their social status, they often cannot afford to send their kids to school. With these heartbreaking statistics regarding education in Honduras, and the clear connection between the poverty rates and the education percentage, it is obvious that the extreme lack of education is greatly hurting the economy of Honduras. Everything related to the economy ultimately comes back to education. This can be solved by making education easily accessible, and affordable. Countries can make education required, which means that all youth have to attend school.

In Honduras, nearly 44 murders for every 100,000 people occurred in 2017 (Global Partnership For Education, 2018). This immense homicide rate is mainly caused by the lack of education in Honduras. When teenagers are not in school, or when adults do not have jobs that they are at during the day, gang violence tends to occur and the death rate skyrockets. The most targeted age groups by gangs are youth ages 13-17 to participate in criminal activity such as drug dealing, extortion, and other crimes. These are the ages of youth that would be attending school, and if they are not, they are on the streets getting involved in dangerous criminal activity. When youth start getting involved in gangs at such young ages, it tends to follow them through their adulthood and they cannot get out, which is the leading cause of the high homicide rate. Solving this problem is not necessarily easy, but it can be done. If youth go to school, this number will greatly decrease. Education in Honduras should be required to lower these numbers.

The lack of education in Honduras can potentially be fixed through a multitude of solutions. One of these solutions is making education and attending school mandatory in Honduras. This would make it possible for everyone in Honduras to receive a form of education, meeting the needs of the majority of people in the country. In order to make this happen, the government would need to try and assess a way to use national funding to make good public schooling available to all kinds of families. An organization that could contribute to solving this nation-wide issue would be the World Bank. World Bank is an organization that provides funding to under privileged countries, so this organization would be a perfect fit to help solve this problem. They can assist with providing the funding to make schooling in Honduras free for all citizens. This funding will be mainly contributed to the building of new schools and filling the new buildings with sufficient resources dedicated to providing students with the supplies they need in order to receive a proper education. Once the schools are up and running, they will need less funding, but there will need to be additional funding on occasion to maintain the state of the schools. It will need to be a lesser amount, but there are supplies that need to be replaced more often. When the funding from World Bank ends, the government itself will need to develop a thought-out plan that resolves the issue. In order to know what will need to come next in the process, it is necessary to see what can be done as a result of the World Bank funding.

It is hard to know what amount World Bank is willing to give, and how that will compare to the schooling expenses. The main issue behind Honduras not having a successful education system is the country's lack of financial attributes. Without the needed profits to run a successful schooling system, there is no way to provide students with the education that they deserve and need. However, while World Bank could provide funding, after the money runs out, the funding for the schools will need to be sustained somehow. The World Bank funding is more intended to get the school system back on track, not to fund the school system forever. With this in mind, the school system can keep getting funding in a variety of ways; such as fundraising through each of the schools, and saving the original money as much as possible to make it extend further into new school years. The extent of this would depend on how much money the school system receives from World Bank originally. This is certainly a place where the community can come into play, as there are also some very wealthy families in Honduras that can afford to donate money to the school system if they would choose to do so. The government needs to apply the law of school being required, and use the funding appropriately to make nation-wide education available and free to all. The government also needs to be responsible for finding someone to fill a government position that monitors attendance in schools and holds people accountable for it. The new school system will only be beneficial if students are attending regularly. As for the community, families need to support the idea and send their children to school. In order for this to succeed, there need to be punishments in place for if kids are not in

school like they should be; such as fines distributed by the person in the government supervising and making sure that the kid(s) are attending school as they should.

While this could be a steady solution for higher-income families, for low-income communities, having a large fine could be a problem financially, which will hopefully only increase the drive for parents to send their children to school everyday. While there could be mechanics involved in how to get kids to school, the plan suggested would involve more, smaller schools that are more local to communities, so that transportation is not an issue. Along with the mandate on attending school, community members will also be able to help maintain the conditions of the new schooling system by contributing help. While World Bank will be able to contribute the funding, labor costs more money that does not necessarily need to be invested when there are people who will be willing to help within the community. This does not have to be a mandatory solution, but it is one that could make a difference in the expenses. Some things that need to be considered are finding, paying, and licensing teachers and principals. This project will help provide school lunches to children daily, solving many of the issues regarding malnourishment. While this is a more expensive solution, it can be more affordable for the country if Honduras is able to gain the needed funding from the World Bank.

Another solution that could potentially be used is building more schools that are suitable for giving these children a proper education. Building schools is something that many volunteer organizations across the world can help with. There are already multiple organizations helping with building schools, such as Global Giving and Schools for Children. Both of these nonprofit organizations would be exceptional resources for building schools for the children of Honduras who are not going to school in the proper conditions. These organizations are charitable nonprofits, so they build the schools that are needed and the country does not owe the organization any money in return for their generosity. However, the government needs to be responsible for making this project happen, and for pushing children to attend school. The organization that volunteers to do the project would fund the project, and would hopefully accept help from the community and other willing contributors to build the school buildings. In order for this project to succeed, the government would need to verify that all of the funding is in order and that the process and its logistics are all figured out. The fact that some children are not used to having a nice school and proper education needs to be considered when implementing this project. Performing this project would ensure that the children of Honduras have a safe place where they can go to be educated, which is good for everyone. With more schools, more children are being educated, there are more jobs as teachers being created, and kids are being fed properly at school along with receiving the education that they need to succeed. Along with schools being beneficial for students, they are also very beneficial for the rest of the community. It can be difficult to find jobs in Honduras, so having local schools would create jobs for teachers, principals, janitorial staff, and cafeteria workers. In order to work at the school, you do not necessarily need a teaching license, but those who have or want to obtain one can then get a job teaching at one of the schools. The whole community, not only students, can benefit from the building of new schools in Honduras.

In the small country of Honduras, good education is not a right, it is a luxury. Sadly, not many people in Honduras have access to a stable education. However, that can be changed by supporting Honduras and understanding the current situation regarding education. By having information, we can use it to volunteer to help them have what we take for granted everyday. Education is the first step towards making a difference, and if people understand the problem, then change can happen. Right now, the

amount of youth in Honduras receiving a proper education is 76.2%. With help from those who know what it means to have a good education, that number can soon change to 100%.

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