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CASE STUDY

Meeting EFA: Honduras Educatodos

Introduction

Education is critical to developing countries' economic capacity. According to the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) *Evaluation to Support Learning: The Evaluation Process of the 7-9th Grade of Educatodos*, an estimated 75 percent of Hondurans had not completed the seventh grade and approximately 1.6 million youth and adults of age had not completed the sixth grade in 2001. The number of out-of-school youth in Honduras presents a particular challenge to meeting Education for All (EFA) goals; the process will take years.

In the early 1990s, USAID and the Secretary of Education began looking at alternative mechanisms to reach out-of-school youth and ensure that both youth and adults complete a sixth grade education. USAID created the Educatodos program through a complementary service delivery model in 1996 to offer youth and adults the opportunity to complete grades one through six in three years. In 2000, the program expanded to include grades seven through nine. Educatodos cost-effectively responds to the demand for basic education in a significantly shorter time frame than the traditional education system. It uses existing country and community infrastructure and an integrated curriculum utilizing audio and printed materials to effectively meet students' needs. Volunteer facilitators with diverse academic backgrounds implement the program from learning centers situated in factories, businesses, schools, and community centers throughout the country.

The following case study examines the overall growth and impact of the Educatodos program in Honduras during the past decade. The case examines the program's contributions in the areas of access, completion, cost and cost-effectiveness, quality, human resources and staffing, and policy and the enabling environment.

Access

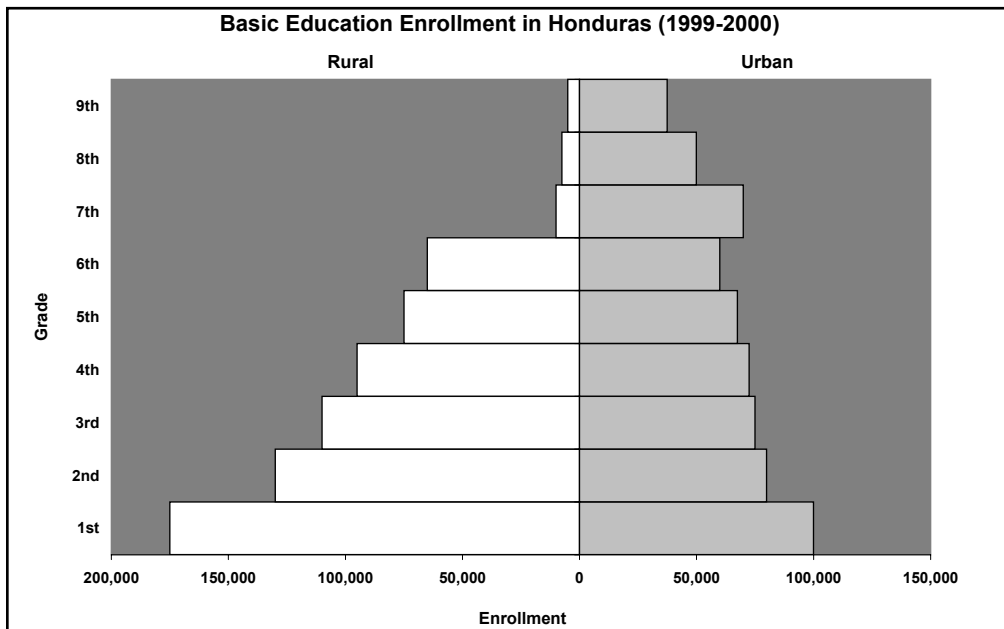
Access to both basic and secondary education has expanded in Honduras during the last 10 years. The government's commitment to meeting EFA has enabled more students to enroll in basic education, with gross enrollment rates increasing from 1,094,792 in 2000 to 1,227,368 in 2003. While longitudinal data is difficult to obtain because many records were destroyed by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, available data do show a net enrollment rate for grades one through six of 87 percent in 2001. The net enrollment for primary education remained consistent through 2003, even rising as high as 94 percent for students in grades one through three. However, net enrollment dropped considerably after sixth grade, with only 29 percent of 13 to 18 year-olds enrolled in grades seven through 12. The following graph shows the drop in rural and urban basic education enrollment as students move from grade one to grade nine. Dropout rates are significantly higher in rural regions compared to urban areas.



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Access to basic education has almost been met for age-appropriate students just entering the system. Honduras has attained higher levels of access. However, the challenge is reaching both the underserved and disadvantaged populations, as well as providing a basic education for students who abandoned school prior to completing grade nine. Data from 2001 show that approximately 310,000 children ages 12 to 18 have not completed grade six and an additional 230,000 students 15 to 18 years old who completed sixth grade had not completed ninth grade. This out-of-school population is Educadores’s target audience: 540,000 students and an additional 1.1 million young adults age 19 to 30 who failed to complete nine years of basic education and other adults seeking alternative means of attaining basic education.

The first of several tables with data from USAID’s December 2002 *Los Participantes de Educadores: Estudio Longitudinal: Primer Informe* summarizes the ages of students at the various grade levels of the Educadores program.

Levels of Schooling and Ages of Participants in Educadores (2002)

| | Grade 1-3 | Grade 4-6 | Grade 7-8 | Grade 1-8 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Initial Years of Schooling | 1.6 | 4.1 | 6.9 | 4.0 |
| Average Age in Program | 27 | 22 | 16 | 25 |
| Range of Ages | 7-74 | 9-78 | 11-52 | 7-78 |

As the table demonstrates, the participants in Educadores enter the program with varying initial levels of education. While the average age of participants entering grades one to three is higher than subsequent grades, 23 percent of participants in grades four to six are under 16 years of age. The average age of participants falls as the level of instruction (i.e., grade) rises, so younger students tend to be enrolled in the higher

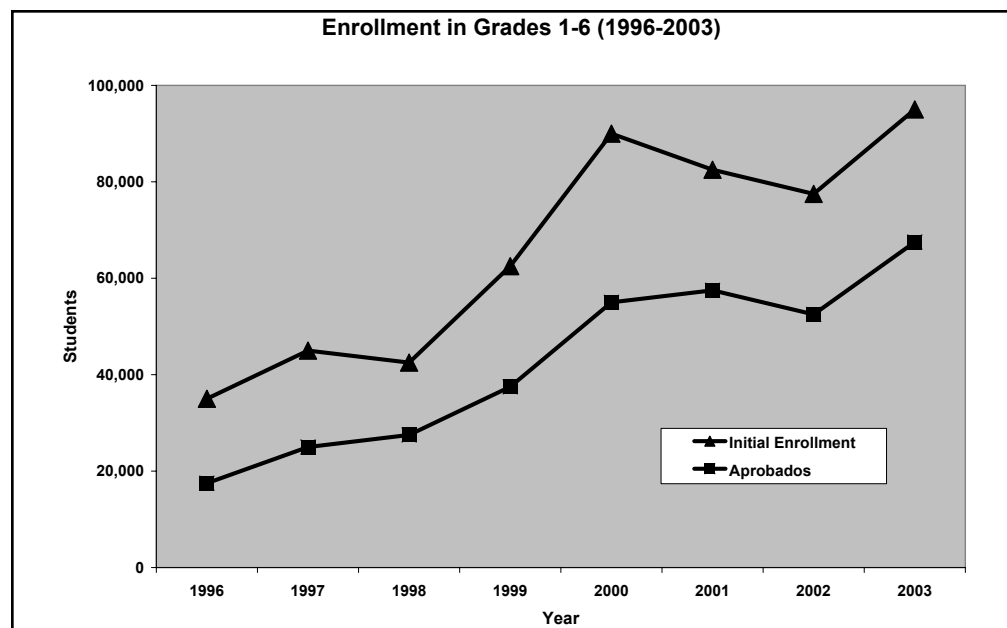
grades. Research has shown that the earlier grades are typically filled by older students who simply want to learn to read and write, while the later grades are younger students who wish to complete either sixth and ninth grade in order to improve their lifetime expected income or reintegrate back into the formal schooling system.

The table below provides a different way of looking at the age distribution data and supports the idea that younger students tend to enroll in the upper grades of the program. Reduction of the average age of participation is particularly important to Honduras's achievement of its EFA and Poverty Reduction goals. For example, the Poverty Reduction goals are to provide 70 percent coverage in grades seven to nine for children ages 13 to 15. Data collected from the Educados program show that two of every three participants in seventh and eighth grades are under 18 years of age and that 36 percent are under 16 years of age.

Distribution of Educados Participants by Age and Level of Instruction

| | Grade 1-3 | Grade 4-6 | Grade 7-8 | Grade 1-8 |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Modal Age | 18 | 15 | 14 | 15 |
| 1 of 3 Students | ≤20 | ≤17 | ≤15 | ≤16 |
| Range of Ages | 21-35 | 18-27 | 16-17 | 17-25 |

Enrollment rates in Educados have risen consistently over the program's life. In 2003, Educados enrolled 117,656 students with approximately 80 percent participating in the grade one to six program and the remaining 20 percent in the grade seven to nine program. Since its inception in 1996, Educados has enrolled over 500,000 students in its primary school program, producing over 350,000 person years of education from grades one through seven. The graph below summarizes enrollment trends over time.





The grade seven to nine program is newer, initiated in the year 2000. Even so, seventh grade enrollment has risen from 2,728 in 2000 to 8,824 in 2003. Enrollments in grade eight have risen from 2,187 in 2002 to 2,957 in 2003. In 2003, 1,436 students completed grade nine, giving the program an efficiency rate of approximately 54 percent, compared to 35 percent in the public schools.

It is important to note that the Educator program targets out-of-school youth and adults who would like to attain a primary education. As a result, the populations in the program are not comparable to the public school system, so drawing comparisons related to the completion rate are tenuous at best. This model serves as an example of a program that is increasing the overall educational level in Hondurans, as well as targeting school-age children.

Completion

Completion of the Educator program should be examined in terms of the number of people for whom the program is providing a sixth or ninth grade education. The World Bank's 2001 *Education for Dynamic Economies: Accelerating Progress Towards EFA* suggests that many low-income developing countries are trapped in a low-returns equilibrium and that until the average level of human capital rises beyond five or six years, the country will not be able to break out of the cycle. Once this threshold is passed, countries seem to achieve a more steady growth path. Educator both contributes to grade level completion and increases the educational level of the adult population in Honduras.

The national completion rate for the public primary education schools in Honduras has improved significantly over the last decade. The gross graduation rate for 12 year-olds in sixth grade was 78 percent in 2003—90 percent in urban areas and 69.9 percent in rural areas. Eighty percent of Educator centers are located in the rural areas of Honduras. The completion rate drops significantly in grades seven to nine. Completion rates in 1999 were approximately 32 percent and rose slightly to approximately 35 percent in 2003. In 2001, there were 232,708 15 to 18 year-olds who had completed sixth grade but had left the system prior to completing ninth grade.

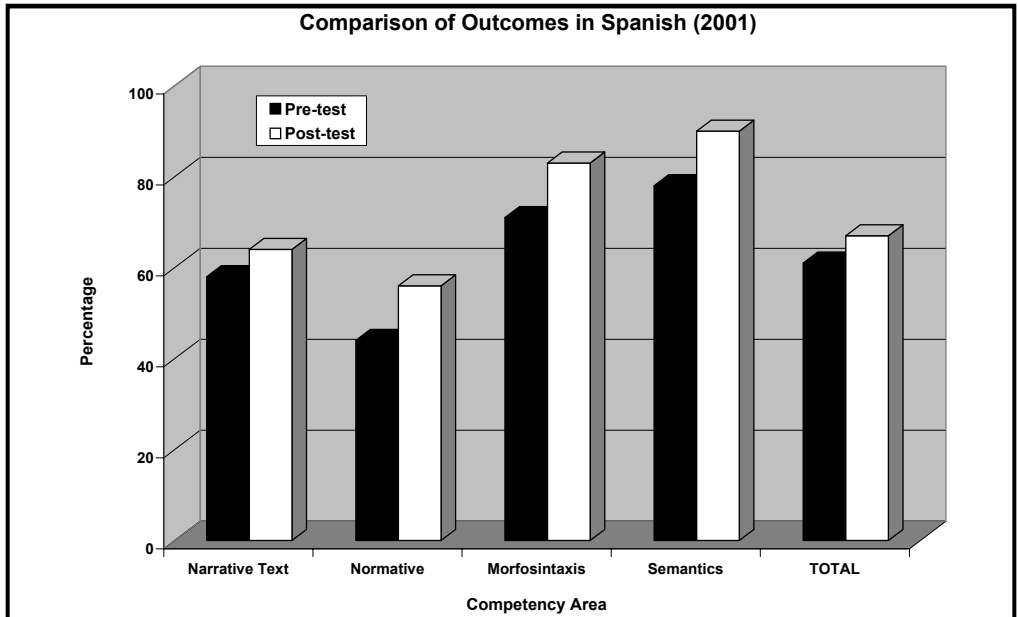
Completion of the Educator program relates to the number of students who complete both the individual two-year grade cycles and the full primary cycle of grades one to six. Examining the completion rates for Educator reveals that the program is as efficient as the public system, with an average completion rate of 61 percent from 1996 to 2003. Completion rates have held steady at 71 percent from 2000 to 2003. Completion rates for the grades seven to nine program, where students are closer in age to their peer population in the public system, are higher at 54 percent, compared to 35 percent in the public education system. The Educator program has produced 350,000 person years of education since 1995 and 7,188 students have completed seventh, eighth, or ninth grade since 2001.

Learning

A study conducted in October and November 2001 by researchers from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morozan (UMCE) and published in *Logros Académicos del Séptimo Grado de Educandos: Estudio Comparativo Externo de los Centros de Educandos e los Centros Regulares* by Unidad Externa de Medición de Calidad Educación measured student learning in the Educandos pilot centers and expansion centers and in the traditional school system. A pre-test was conducted for students in the seventh grade pilot centers at the beginning of the year, and post tests were conducted for students in the pilot centers, expansion centers, and government schools. Results from the evaluation included the following results:

- Students from Educandos demonstrated similar and, in some cases, better performance on measures of Spanish and mathematics than students in the regular public school system. These results were achieved in spite of having fewer resources, less school time, and volunteer facilitators instead of teachers.
- The performance of students in the Educandos pilot centers was significantly better than the performance of participants in the expansion centers and the students in traditional schools. The result was statistically significant.
- An analysis between the pre- and post-tests given to students in the Educandos pilot centers indicated that their performance improved significantly in each of the Spanish and mathematics tests at the grade four, six, and seven levels.
- In Spanish, 67 percent of seventh grade participants achieved full mastery of the competencies corresponding to fourth grade competencies, 46 percent achieved mastery of sixth grade competencies, and 22 percent achieved full mastery of the skills associated with seventh grade.
- Mathematics results were slightly lower: 53 percent of students in the pilot centers achieved full mastery of the fourth grade competencies. Of the seventh grade participants, 76 percent began at the non-mastery level and only 2 percent achieved mastery by the end.

In reviewing these results, it is important to note that while both the UMCE tests and the Educandos program are based on objectives provided by the Secretary of Education (SE), Educandos uses an integrated program, whereby the academic subjects are integrated within content areas or themes. The UMCE tests evaluated the math and Spanish in district tests. The results provide evidence that students are effectively learning core subjects through an integrated approach. It is also important to note that no pre-test was conducted in the government and expansion centers, so the results do not reflect learning gains during the year. Finally, caution should be taken in interpreting these results comparatively. Students took this test in the seventh grade level of both the Educandos program and the government system; however, it is unclear whether the students in the Educandos program had been long-term participants in the program or had completed their previous grades education in the public system. As a result, the only learning outcomes attributable directly to the Educandos program are those increases occurring in the pilot centers.



The graph displays grade seven student competency at the grade four level in Spanish. On average, students improved mastery of content areas by 10 percentage points during the year and seven percentage points on the total score. Students at the pilot Centers performed slightly worse on grade six competencies, increasing from 49 percent to 57 percent on the overall score. At the grade seven competency level, students improved their test scores by 10 percentage points, raising scores from 45 percent to 55 percent during the year.

The results in mathematics were slightly lower than gains in Spanish. The table below summarizes results at the three grade levels for seventh grade students and their level of content mastery at fourth, sixth, and seventh grades.

Percentage of Students Answering Math Questions Correctly (2001)

| Competency Level | Pre-test | Post-test |
|------------------|----------|-----------|
| Grade 4 | 61 | 67 |
| Grade 6 | 34 | 42 |
| Grade 7 | 25 | 31 |

One additional note should be added regarding gender. The Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project conducted a study that examined the impact of Educatodos on women. Results from the study suggest that the model assists both facilitators and students obtain control over everyday factors that impact their lives, including social, political, biological, physical, and sexual. Results also indicate Educatodos helped increase women participants' self-esteem and is providing new opportunities for women to enter the workforce, although no statistical data was available.

Cost and Cost-Effectiveness

The cost of the Educatodos program is examined from various perspectives. First, cost to develop such a program, cost to operate the program, and make-up of those costs are reviewed. Second, it is important to examine the cost-effectiveness of the Educatodos program in terms of unit cost per student enrolled and per student completed. Costs are compared to the same measures for the public schools in Honduras.

Cost for Educatodos and the Public Education System (1996-2003)

| | EDUCATODOS | | PUBLIC ED | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Total Costs | Recurrent Costs | Recurrent Costs per Student | Recurrent Costs per Student* |
| Grade 1-6 | \$18,584,415 | \$13,584,415 | \$40 | \$102 |
| Grade 7-9 | \$7,617,680 | \$1,117,680 | \$80 | \$292 |

*Data for 2003 only

In 1993, USAID and a local NGO began to develop the curriculum and materials for the SE. Between 1993 and 1996, approximately \$5 million was invested in development costs to initiate the grades one to six program, and an additional \$6.5 million for the grades seven to nine program. In all, \$11.5 million was invested for start-up and expansion of the Educatodos program.

Recurrent costs of the program from 1995 to 2003 were approximately 73 percent of the total costs and encompass expenditures such as salaries and wages, travel and transportation, materials and supplies, and operational costs. The recurrent costs of the program during this time were funded jointly by USAID/Honduras at 68 percent and the Ministry of Education at 32 percent. It is expected that in 2005, USAID provided \$2.1 million and the SE \$1.5 million. By 2009, the total supported by USAID is expected to drop to \$1.1 million and the SE \$2.5 million. In 2010, 100 percent of Educatodos will be financed by the SE. As the table above indicates, the cost per student enrolled in Educatodos is \$40, compared to \$102 in the public education system. The per-student cost rises to \$80 in the program for grades seven to nine, but is still significantly lower than the per-student cost in the public education system.

The cost-effectiveness of the Educatodos program can be evaluated in terms of its average cost to produce a student who completes the primary school equivalent. The completion rate for the grades one to six program was an average 61 percent from 1996 to 2003, compared to 78 percent in the public education system. Based on the unit costs presented above, the cost per student that completes the Educatodos program is \$197, compared to \$903 for public education. The difference in costs stems partially from the fact that per student costs are lower and students can complete the grades one to six program in three years, versus six years in the traditional system.

The completion rate for the grades seven to nine program was an average 54 percent from 2001 to 2003, compared to approximately 35 percent in the public education system. Based on the unit costs presented above, the cost per completing student in



Educadores is \$180. Per-student costs are also lower in this program, and students can complete the program in 25 months, versus three years in the traditional system. A 2000 USAID report estimated that the cost per completing student in public school grades seven to nine was \$702. However, recent estimates using 2003 data suggest that the actual cost of completion for grades seven through nine could be as high as \$2,736.

Critical Features of Educadores

One of the main strategies of the Educadores program is to establish a support system made up of existing local organizations. As a result, the learning centers are situated in a variety of locations, including factories, micro-enterprises, NGOs, government installations, municipalities, vocational centers, and schools. Each participating organization that agrees to house a learning center signs a cooperative agreement with the program.

Educadores has a decentralized structure for promoting, monitoring, and evaluating quality at the local level. Each department has at least one coordinator, named by Educadores, who coordinates and manages all of the regional operations and coordinates with the Departmental Secretariate of Education. Each department or district has municipal promoters who are appointed by the SE. Their responsibility is to organize and supervise the learning centers. Teachers are volunteer facilitators from the community with varied economic and academic backgrounds. They receive training on program methodology and are supported by the program promoters and coordinators to ensure quality teaching.

Guidelines that orient the curriculum for grades seven to nine follow SE guidelines and were developed around performance standards in four basic areas: mathematics, communications, science and technology, and social science. The basic performance standards focus on concepts and content that is pertinent to the daily lives of Educadores participants. Five cross-cutting themes chosen through discussions with key national education players and reflecting essential issues faced by participants drive the program: population, environment, health, national identity, and citizenship and democracy. Work skills and values are incorporated into each of the cross-cutting themes, and participants develop community projects to integrate classroom learning into daily reality. All learning is student-centered and constructivist-based.

Educadores has a flexible schedule that requires only an average of two and a half hours of group work per day, complemented by homework. Classrooms are multi-grade and multi-age with students ranging from eight to 40 years old, and three grade levels are completed in one year. Learning is acquired through a combination of audio tapes, *jornadas de aprendizajen*, and community projects. Assessments in grades one to six have expanded since the program's inception. From 1995 to 1997, students were given a final exam. In 1998, a process exam was added to ensure quality. By the year 2000, students in grades one to six were required to take three process tests and a final exam in order to pass to the next grade level. For grades seven to nine, exercises within the units foster learning. Students are required to take quizzes at the end of each unit to review learning

objectives and institutional tests are given at the end of each cross-cutting theme. Formative evaluation processes were used by program developers to ensure quality in the curriculum development process.

Human Resources and Staffing

The nature of the staff employed in conjunction with the administration of the complementary programs often differs from that of the traditional school system. The volunteer facilitators that comprise the teaching force in the Educadores program are a key element in assuring that participants continue their studies. In 2000, there were approximately 8,823 facilitators working across 15 regions in the Educadores program. Of the total number of facilitators, 3,819 were men and 5,004 were women.

Eighty-two percent of the current learning groups that provide instruction in grades one to six are located in the rural regions of Honduras where the average school attainment levels are below four years of primary schooling. In the grade one to six level, volunteer facilitators often have six years of education or less and are primarily housewives and small farmers, although 18 percent of facilitators at this level are teachers. Approximately 35 percent of the volunteers are former Educadores participants who have returned to contribute to the program. The volunteers earn approximately \$100 per month in addition to a food basket, travel, and transportation valued at approximately \$2.90 per facilitator. The student to facilitator ratio for grades one to six is approximately 15 to one.

Facilitators at the grade seven to nine level have attained a higher level of education. Fifty percent of the volunteers have university degrees and 71 percent are trained teachers or public employees. Working at the higher levels of the program also commands a higher salary—approximately \$300 per month in addition to a food, travel, and transportation stipend. In contrast to grades one to six, 56 percent of the volunteer facilitators for grades seven to nine are located in the urban areas and only 44 percent are located in the rural regions of Honduras. Twenty-four percent of the facilitators who now teach seventh grade previously taught grades one to six and approximately 10 percent are former students of the program. The student to facilitator ratio for grades seven to nine is slightly higher at 21 to one.

The average length of volunteer service in Educadores is 18 months and 90 percent of volunteers are also involved in other volunteer activities in their own communities. Eighty-two percent of facilitators in grades seven to nine and 62 percent of facilitators in grades one to six hold other employment. Based on the earnings from their primary employment, the value of the time contributed by the volunteer facilitators to Educadores has been estimated at approximately \$650,000 per year in grades one to six and approximately \$2 million at the grade seven to nine levels.

In addition to the volunteer facilitators, each department has a coordinator who manages all of the regional operations and coordinates the program with the SE. Municipal promoters are appointed by the SE and are responsible for organizing new learning



centers and supervising the existing ones. Both groups actively participate in all Educadores activities.

Policy and the Enabling Environment

The policy and enabling environment in a country will significantly impact the development and implementation of complementary models and systems. In the case of Educadores, the Secretariat of Education has been extremely supportive of such programs, even including specific budget lines to help support several alternative models of service delivery (e.g., Educadores, Telebasica).

In August 1995, the Honduran National Congress issued a decree establishing a USAID agreement and the government created U.S. donation-funded program to work assist the SE with the Basic Education for All Adults project. The statute established the following four principles:

- Certificates obtained by participants who pass grades one to six in Educadores will be officially recognized.
- The different grades of study are equivalent to the corresponding grade levels in the national system.
- Participants in Educadores who pass the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade are authorized to matriculate into the next grade level in basic education centers, middle schools, or other institutions providing basic education.
- Students who pass ninth grade are eligible to enroll in secondary education.

As part of the Hurricane Mitch reconstruction package, USAID/Honduras and the SE founded the IEQ II project to expand the Educadores program to grades seven, eight, and nine. Under the agreement, the SE assured that the national curriculum department would cooperate with Educadores to develop appropriate curriculum, adopted the Educadores grade seven to nine curriculum and applied it to all traditional and alternative education systems in Honduras, collaborated with USAID and its contractors to create sustainable strategies for the program, officially recognized the agreements and procedures pertaining to the program, provided the initial sets of texts and audio learning materials to new organizations and groups implementing the Educadores program, and assured that the SE personnel at the departmental and district levels cooperated with all organizations involved in the project.

The SE has further supported both the grades one to six and grades seven to nine programs through the provision of direct funding. The funding has supported the volunteer facilitators' salaries and wages, transportation and fuel, and food. While the program is a Secretary of Education program, students and teachers are excluded from official government training and counts.

The Educadores program has experienced many successes in its first eight years of operation, yet, it also faces dropout and retention challenges, similar to the public school system. In the coming years, the program will face the challenge of ensuring that it

continues to assist the public school system in reaching EFA targets while reducing dropouts, improving training for facilitators, and ensuring that both youth and adults continue to have cost-effective access to education.



Acknowledgements

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