



November, 2021

www.ACTSHonduras.org

Health Update

Under the skilled management of Nelson Mejia, who leads the clinic committee in El Rosario, the clinic has remained open through the pandemic.

ACTS' medical committee, led by Sue Burgos and Jinny Brack, work via Zoom with Nurse Nolvía and Dr. Alyssa who treat 100 patients a month for acute illness, chronic disease, accidents, family planning, and more.

ACTS clinicians also use Zoom to teach about isolation and quarantine, protective masks and equipment, cleaning surfaces, vaccination, and how to deal with Covid symptoms.

Nurse Nolvía and Nelson go to the poorest villages to extend our reach.

Covid has swept Honduras and hospitals are full of patients receiving only basic care. The region has not escaped illness and death, particularly among unvaccinated people. The government provides vaccines, but depends on villages to provide transportation for the medical teams.

ACTS has paid for more than 10,000 masks. Early on, local seamstresses fabricated hundreds cloth masks. Lately, as surgical masks have become available, we have paid for the clinic to buy them. As elsewhere, their use is an individual decision.

When schools reopen, Nurse Nolvía will resume school visits to ensure surveillance of every child.



Oxen drag latrine frames to a remote Honduran village. (Story inside)

Travel Ban Doesn't Sideline ACTS

Your funding makes our response to Honduran needs possible. Some say, nothing is as important in a disaster as flexibility. We would add connections and experience. After 40 years of volunteering in one small mountain region of Honduras, our connection with local leaders and families is generational. Experience means knowing the land, the economy, and the health care system.

Flexibility meant pivoting from traveling frequently to Honduras to bring experts, equipment, materials, and funding to rethinking our projects to be done at a distance. What could we accomplish in this time of great need without being there, and how? Read on and you'll see how we are collaborating differently, local leaders are doing more leading, and the young adults are exceptional. In this time, above all, we are committed to help make livable communities where life is healthy and safe.

Please join us by contributing. Every dollar donated goes to Honduras.

Linda Kennedy, president, ACTS

Steering Committee: David Bogacz, dentistry, Tilton; Jinny Brack, pediatrics, Hanover; Sue Burgos, primary care, Bethel; Michael Harris, education, Hanover; Tim Keane, operations, Thetford; Robert Keene, dentistry, Hanover; Linda Kennedy, president and cancer prevention, Thetford; Ethan LaRochelle, technology, Thetford; Betsy Rybeck Lynd, agriculture and education, Plainfield, NH; Peter Mason, public health, Lebanon; Theresa Mundy, education, Lyme; Juliana Ortego, teen leadership, NYC; Jennifer Randolph, data systems, Hanover; John Sanders, medicine, Lyme; Dan Saulnier, infrastructure, Springfield, NH; Dean Seibert, president emeritus, Norwich; Hart Silverwood, treasurer, Lee; Brad Taylor, agriculture, Ithaca; Helen Whyte, secretary, Lyme; Bryce Wilson, water systems, Cupertino, CA.



Nelly Santos prepares and plants her Hope & Faith garden plot.

Early Harvests From Faith & Hope Gardens

Beans and corn are not just the mainstays of family dining in El Rosario; for many, they are the entire diet. In Hope & Faith, a thriving pilot project funded by donations, Dean Seibert and a lively group of interested women are improving family nutrition by learning best practices and growing nutritious vegetables. “We are addressing the well documented problem of micronutrient and vitamin deficiency in the diets of rural Hondurans through a ‘home grown’ program conceived and implemented by the women of El Rosario,” says Seibert, ACTS president emeritus.

Best practices for kitchen gardens include making compost, growing seedlings in a nursery, watering with a chicken manure slurry, and hand irrigation during dry spells. Donations have made it possible to construct the first wave of rooftop catchment systems, which will enable storage of water for use as needed.

Oscar Ruiz is an agronomist trained in Honduras working as a commercial grower in Vermont. He joins the group on Zoom and his insights on best designs for simple irrigation appropriate for the home gardens will be adopted in 2022.

Team Builds Economic Resilience

Farming families in the El Rosario region are battling to feed their households in the face of drought, raging rainstorms, terrible soil, and a string of disasters. We maintain close contact with community leaders and provide seeds and emergency foodstuffs as needed. Microclimates and hyperlocal farming practices drive differences in crop production that can mean enough to eat three meals a day, or just one.

International experts recommend an approach that prioritizes resilience at the country and household level. In El Rosario, that means generating income not solely dependent on farming.

The other major sector in Honduras is manufacturing, and those hard-to-get jobs are in the city, about four hours away by bus. Recently, Charlie Miller of The Children’s Initiative, and long-time ACTS collaborator, counted 18 graduates of the El Rosario high school funded by The Children’s Initiative living in the city and working to supplement family incomes. Their ability to get and keep jobs is directly related to their high school diplomas, participation in ACTS’ Fuerza para el Futuro, English, and computer classes. In short, they were well-prepared to work, and they are succeeding.

Regenerative Agriculture Proposed for a Dry Corridor

In Honduras, the old ways of farming have left more than 30 percent of children and adults with stunting due to inadequate nutrition. Around the world, scientists, governments, and foundations have tested changes to address persistent drought, worn soil, overuse of pesticides, and growing populations. One promising new approach is “regenerative agriculture,” a model of farming that builds healthy soils, pays attention to water cycles, reduces chemical impacts, and increases the diversity of crops and the natural ecosystem. This encourages low-cost approaches that are resilient to the effects of climate change, such as the cycles of drought and flooding that have long plagued the Central American region known as the “dry corridor.”

In consultation with Gustavo Merten, an agronomist with experience in the region, ACTS is pursuing regenerative agriculture as a long-term solution to increase yield by improving the ecosystem. This approach departs from traditional Honduran farming practices. But it has already seen results elsewhere in the region. Regenerative agriculture can be implemented field by field as farmers choose to participate, or not. With Gustavo’s leadership, ACTS will



use community-based participatory research techniques to involve local people in collective and systematic inquiry and reflection, with community members fully engaged in every step of the journey to educate and improve farming practices.

LA FUERZA GROWS INTO LEADERSHIP

A week-long leadership camp for teens is an annual highlight in El Rosario. For more than ten years, under our direction, Dartmouth students have been the counselors onsite. Scheduled for December 2020, the students were unable to travel. The camp, known as La Fuerza para el Futuro (Force for the Future), looked to be another beloved tradition cancelled as a pandemic precaution.

Jules Ortego called El Rosario to apologize, and was instead delighted when village leaders insisted, La Fuerza must go on, full strength.

The oldest teens, some with ten years attending La Fuerza, stepped up as junior counselors. The Dartmouth students redesigned the planned program and arranged to coach the junior counselors through the activities, by Zoom. Funds donated for Fuerza supplies were transferred to Honduras and the junior counselors managed the budget and supply shopping.

In an inspiring contribution to the community, La Fuerza built stairs and benches for La Luminata, a favorite destination for families on an evening walk to chat and look out over the village.

Dental Care Is a Top Priority for ACTS Team

When retired dentist Bob Keene brought his international experience and humanitarian perspective to ACTS in 2015, we were able to fulfill the most persistent request from residents of El Rosario who told us, "We need a dentist; it's serious." Bob's vision, the El Rosario dental clinic, is staffed every month by Dr. Reina who arrives by bus. Bob's leadership and onsite teaching, paired with steady work on the physical plant, have made dentistry in the village resilient and patients travel long distances for care, even during the pandemic.

Spring water from a source in El Rosario is piped into the dental clinic but eventually, the sediment overwhelmed the plumbing system. That brought the challenge of engineering repairs and replacements, once again by Zoom. The clinic is up and running again, but this was an expensive set of repairs, and we appreciate donors who made it possible.



The Alemans, a local Chaquite couple, show pride in a latrine they helped build.

A Local Assembly Line for Latrines

For decades, ACTS has been funding families building themselves latrines (outhouses), one by one. Chaquite is four rough miles from El Rosario and at least a decade behind in development. The cluster of 100 homes benefits from piped water to outdoor spigots but has no electricity and the homes are without sanitary facilities. Day after day, residents young and old find a spot in the bush.

A three-way collaboration was the solution. ACTS provided \$17,000 funding, local experts in El Rosario agreed to manage the project, and every family in Chaquite provided labor for a community-level assembly line latrine building project. The all-metal latrines are practical in a deforested country and easy to clean. We set up shop in El Rosario with electricity for modern cutting, welding, and drilling, then went old-school to transport the frames by ox cart to the site where families used pickaxes to dig holes for the waste. Testimonies from single mothers, older couples, and others share heartfelt thanks for the dignity of a private latrine.

DON'T DELAY!

**PLEASE
DONATE
TODAY**



There are several easy ways to donate to ACTS. Point your cell phone camera at the QR code above and you will be taken right to our Web page.

There, you can use a credit card.

The link also has details about online shopping tools that put a small percentage of your purchases to work for us.

Or mail us a check to
ACTS HONDURAS

P.O. Box 433 Norwich, VT 05055

<http://www.ACTSHonduras.org/contribute>

Schools Repairs Sorely Needed

Education has been paused throughout Honduras during the pandemic. School buildings were abandoned. Post-hurricanes, our survey of the nearby one-room schoolhouses serving K-6 revealed ten need repairs to deal with unstable walls and damaged roofs, water damage, unusable latrines, and ruined interiors. Education is critical to economic development in Honduras, and this is a devastating setback.

Over time, as El Rosario has gotten squared away, we have extended our help to neighboring villages and their schools. "Safety First," which is phase one of ACTS' project to repair schools, is underway, managed by local leaders with an initial commitment of \$6,000 to prepare schools for possible opening in February 2022. Phase 2 funding will follow immediately.



We look forward to the return of normal classroom operations, like this in 2016.



THANKS TO OUR MANY PARTNERS

Engineers without Borders Northeastern University, alumni chapter: water systems; The Dorothy and Jack Byrne Foundation: funding La Fuerza para el Futuro; Liga Contra Cancer in Honduras: cancer screening, treatment, research; Dartmouth's Norris Cotton Cancer Center: cancer screening and research; Dartmouth-Hitchcock Pathology: research to prevent cancer; Hanover, NH, Rotary Club: funding latrine building; Krasnoff Foundation: funding for Taking Care of Moms; Honduran Foundation for Investigation of Agriculture (FHIA): agricultural extension agency; Zondervan Foundation: literacy; NH Charitable Trust: training farmers; The Children's Institute; Coverys Community Foundation: education and management to reduce agricultural chemical exposure; Partners of the Americas: international partnership; The Rassias Foundation: program in teaching English; Lyme, NH, Congregational Church, United Church of Dorset and East Rupert, VT, and the Woodlands, Lebanon: donated clothing; United States Air Force: transport of goods to Honduras; Lyme, NH, talent show: donation of proceeds; Universidad de Catolica San Pedro Sula: academic partner; the fire departments of Hanover and Springfield, NH, and Thetford and Windsor, VT: firefighting equipment.

New Books When Schools Reopen

Textbooks, workbooks, atlases, dictionaries, encyclopedias, fiction, non-fiction, and picture books. When ten K-6 schools reopen, they will be stocked with appropriate new materials obtained from Central and Latin American publishers, thanks to a generous grant to ACTS from the Zondervan Foundation.

Rubi Simon of the ACTS Education Committee is a trained librarian and native Spanish speaker who will use her experience and contacts to select materials geared to the Honduran school curriculum.

This isn't Zondervan's first support. A foundation grant helped ACTS to open a library with a collection of new books almost a decade ago. The library in El Rosario is a key resource for students of all ages.

Teachers organize a rotation to bring their classes to use the materials. After school, the library is a key destination for high school students with homework. They rely on the reference materials including atlases for map making and the internet for information searches. Yorlin, the librarian, devised a system to make



We're supporting two young librarians.

computer access an earned privilege for research with books. During the pandemic, the library has been operating on a limited basis with two Fuerza-trained teens as junior librarians, making loans and enforcing social distancing.