



LIGHT OF ESPERANZA & ESPERANZAS UNIDAS

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

PROGRAM SUMMARY

2021 was a year of transformation for Light of Esperanza. After seven years of tedious efforts, Light of Esperanza was finally able to accomplish a major goal of our organization: to become a registered non-profit organization in the country of Honduras. While Light of Esperanza continues to maintain its status as a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the United States, this new status in Honduras will allow us to greatly expand the scope of our work and the impact that we can have on the lives of the women and youth in rural Honduras. Our new Honduras-based non-profit organization is now known as “Esperanzas Unidas” (“*United Hope*”). Light of Esperanza will continue to raise funds for Esperanzas Unidas, as well as provide guidance in operational and programming decisions.

Using the past twelve years of service in Honduras, our core team crafted a renewed vision for both organizations, with a commitment to tangible projects that generate educational and economic opportunities for the women and youth in rural Honduras. Among the many ideas produced for both short-term and long-term projects, our organizations have begun to implement three principle programs. “Project Bamburas” uses bamboo to guide our environmental and entrepreneurial programming. Project “Leaders of Tomorrow” provides a package of support for promising young girls from rural villages to pursue educational and leadership development through their high school career. “Project Rosa” offers cohorts of women the opportunity to engage in entrepreneurial training with the goal to receive the experience and financial savings necessary to begin their own independent business operations.

Another major accomplishment during 2021 was the procurement of land to use as our base of operations in Honduras. Located in the village of Chaguiton, Copan, these twelve acres of land will serve as the headquarters for Esperanzas Unidas’s major programming.

“PROJECT BAMBURAS”

In 2020, leaders of Light of Esperanza began to investigate the possibility of using bamboo as a resource to answer the desperate call in rural Honduras for environmental regeneration and economical development.

Bamboo is a remarkable plant, maturing to production capability in three to four years. Additionally, bamboo offers unique environmental benefits, such as the absorption of carbon dioxide, the release of 35% more oxygen into the atmosphere when compared to equivalent hardwood trees, and the stabilization of the land through its root system, among many other advantages.

The more we began to learn about the environmental benefits of bamboo, we also began to discover the potential economic development projects that bamboo can offer. Because bamboo is so versatile, being able to produce everything from paper, flooring, furniture, charcoal, food, building materials, and much more, our core team began to plot a strategy for a variety of future projects that will give women from the rural villages in Honduras the opportunity for high-quality employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for years to come.

In early 2021, Light of Esperanza and Esperanzas Unidas began to communicate with CASSA, a sustainable construction company from Guatemala, in the hopes of planning joint projects through bamboo. In September of 2021, a core team of Esperanzas Unidas traveled to Guatemala to learn more about CASSA’s operations, as well as to plan future collaboration between our agencies. CASSA offered to include Esperanzas Unidas in a program that they had already received funding for, promising bamboo to plant on our land in Honduras, the construction of two prototype bamboo homes, and the training necessary for our team to become proficient in working with bamboo. This partnership continued to develop over the course of 2021, with the planning of a trip of CASSA’s team to survey our land in Honduras in order to prepare the land for these projects in the Spring of 2022. CASSA and Esperanzas Unidas have mutually committed themselves to collaborating together to seek further financial support for an enhancement of bamboo-related programming in 2022 and beyond.

PROJECT “LEADERS OF TOMORROW”

The education of youth in rural Honduras has always been a prime objective of the programming that Light of Esperanza has dedicated our efforts towards. Over the past twelve years, Light of Esperanza has awarded sixty scholarships, donated more than \$5,000 of school supplies, coordinated educational field trips for village students to visit the Mayan ruins at Copan Ruinas, renovated school buildings, and established six computer centers in schools.

While it is difficult enough for all children to pursue their educational dreams and aspirations due to the prohibitive financial cost of studying in Honduras past the sixth grade, it is even more challenging for young girls due to a continued reality of discrimination. Our team was shocked when learning of a recent study that stated that only six percent of females age twenty to twenty-nine from impoverished families in Honduras have completed their secondary school education.

Project “Leaders of Tomorrow” provides a package of support to groups of teenage girls to help them become our future leaders, obtaining the keys to opening the doors of higher education and to becoming working professionals. Included in this package is a full scholarship to complete the three years of high school in Honduras, a private tutor with weekly classes in English, a private tutor in computation, trainings on how to run a non-profit organization, and opportunities to participate and present at conferences with community and business leaders. Additionally, participants in our “Leaders of Tomorrow” program will have the opportunity to learn how to manage a micro-business, gaining invaluable entrepreneurial skills that will provide them the tools to become future independent entrepreneurs if they choose.

In 2021, Esperanzas Unidas interviewed a number of potential applicants for the “Leaders of Tomorrow” program, ultimately choose five girls for our first cohort of “Leaders.” Gloria, is a sixteen-year old girl from the village of Candelaria, Copan. She hopes to become a lawyer in the future so that she can help women and girls fight against discrimination. Valeria, is a fifteen-year old girl from the village of Dulce Nombre. She hopes to be able to study in school so that she can have a better future, a decent job, and be able to help her parents. Diana, is a fifteen-year old girl from the village of Dulce Nombre. She wants to become a Pediatrician, so that she can help children in the future. Karol, is a fourteen-year old girl from the village of Candelaria, Copan. She loves to math, and hopes to become a math teacher in the future. Britany, is a fourteen-year old girl from the village of Dulce Nombre. She is excited to have received this scholarship and opportunity through Esperanzas Unidas, as she hopes to use it to improve the lives of people in her community. All of these youth demonstrated superb academic skills, as well as a strong commitment to the goals of Esperanzas Unidas to uplift the youth and women of rural Honduras.

In November of 2021, Esperanzas Unidas started to integrate these five girls into the programming for our “Leaders of Tomorrow” project. Volunteers from Light of Esperanza in the United States offered to provide weekly online tutoring in English. Using a curriculum developed Light of Esperanza’s volunteers who are trained ESL teachers in the U.S., these classes have served both to help our “Leaders” rapidly advance in their English language skills, as well as have the opportunity to connect with mentors in the United States.

Our “Leaders” have also had the opportunity to begin to learn about the operational functions and programming of Esperanzas Unidas, accompanying our team on presentations in villages, as well as attending trainings on bamboo through representatives of the CASSA company.

In February of 2022, our “Leaders” will begin their first year of high school. Esperanzas Unidas will provide them with all of their school supplies, uniforms, Internet connection, and a laptop to work with. The special English and Computation classes our organization provides them will continue throughout the year.

In June of 2022, Esperanzas Unidas will implement our first micro-business, a Chicken Egg Cooperative. This business will provide our “Leaders” with the necessary experience on how to manage a commercial operation. Esperanzas Unidas will train each “Leader” in successful business techniques so that this Cooperative not only generates revenue, but will continue to serve as a training module for new “Leaders” in years to come.

“PROJECT ROSA”

Inspired by the mother of Co-Directors, Iris and Angela Madrid Lara, “Project Rosa” will serve to empower groups of women in entrepreneurial experiences, as well as establish the financial savings necessary to begin their own independent business. Light of Esperanza and Esperanzas Unidas will build upon our accumulated knowledge after implementing eight self-sustaining cooperative business projects over the past twelve years in different villages throughout the State of Copan. Cohorts of women will manage a guided business endeavor over a three year period, saving their portion of the proceeds in a special account so that after three years they will have sufficient experience and funds to begin their own business.

Esperanzas Unidas plans to begin the first business, a Pig Ranch, in October of 2022.

VOLUNTEERS

Light of Esperanza continues to operate in the United States as a 100% volunteer-based organization. Volunteers are in charge of managing the Board of Directors, fundraising efforts, tutoring the “Leaders of Tomorrow” program, as well as the advising of programming activities implemented in Honduras.

Beginning in 2024, Light of Esperanza plans to organize yearly volunteer-trips to support the activities of Esperanzas Unidas in Honduras.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2021

In total, Light of Esperanza raised \$6,576 in donations for the 2021 fiscal year. Because this year was focused on the transition of legalizing and establishing Esperanzas Unidas as a non-profit organization in Honduras, as well as the extreme limitations that Covid presented in our ability to implement programming, the majority of the expenses in 2021 were used for administrative and fundraising purposes. In total, Light of Esperanza's expenses for the 2021 fiscal year were \$1,209. Additionally, Light of Esperanza received an in-kind financial contribution from Angela Madrid Lara and Shmuel Rubinstein for operational costs during the 2021 fiscal year.