

## EL MAESTRO EN CASA, INC.

### **Background information**

El Maestro en Casa, Inc. is an organization that seeks to empower the rural populations of the province of Intibucá, Honduras by offering them an efficient and participative system of distance education, primary through high school. Since Honduras suffers from one of the highest illiteracy rates among developing countries, reaching 70% among the rural indigenous populations of the mountain villages of Intibucá, El Maestro en Casa was established in 1995 in order to offer an alternative for all those who, for reasons of poverty, geographic isolation, age, sex or race, are outside the formal education process. Instituto Hondureño de Educación por Radio (Honduran Institute of Education by Radio – IHER), a Honduran non-profit institute provides the government approved curriculum and books. The students pay one small annual fee to IHER that includes registration with the Honduran Ministry of Education and books for each of the four primary subjects or nine secondary subjects. El Maestro en Casa, Inc. independently organizes and manages the program in the province of Intibucá, and is responsible for its own financial sustainability. The activities of El Maestro en Casa are divided into three main categories: Educational Services, Administration, and Curriculum Development, each described in detail below. Initially El Maestro en Casa operated under the alternate name of IHER-Intibucá. Since El Maestro en Casa was incorporated it has not operated under any alternate names.

### **Past Activities**

#### **A. Educational Services:** approximately 70% of our activities

1. Weekly review sessions: The school year is divided in 4 modules of 9 or 10 weeks each, with one primary subject and 2 or 3 secondary subjects completed in each module. The students study at home and meet once a week for reinforcement. Where possible, students are organized in community groups; those students without a convenient community group attend Saturday sessions in La Esperanza, the largest town of the province of Intibucá. Students study assigned units at home, participate in discussions, present written homework at each weekly meeting, and take exams at completion of the module.

- Originally volunteer student leaders and the volunteer coordinator conducted these activities, with the help of other volunteers for the Saturday sessions. Since 2002, first two, then three salaried extensionists and the administrator have attended the community groups. The Saturday groups have been attended by the extensionists, the coordinator and the graduating high school students as their social work requirement. The coordinator, an extensionist and several Peace Corps volunteers have attended the high school groups.
- The community groups meet at least weekly, in a location central to several villages. The Saturday and high school groups meet weekly in La Esperanza.
- In rural Intibucá there are few public schools past the sixth grade, and many children do not complete the sixth grade because they need to work. Our program allows adults to begin or continue their education while they work and raise their families.
- Initially, expenses were paid by the volunteer coordinator. Since 2002 TROCAIRE has provided the operating budget that includes two extensionists and the administrator. These funds end in April, 2009. The salary of the third extensionist was provided by a short term grant from IBIS, and now comes from private donations.

2. Seminars: We have provided several 1 to 3-day training seminars for volunteer student leaders and graduating high school students to prepare them for assisting student groups. In addition we have offered 3-day seminars on seeking employment, and 1-day workshops on HIV-AIDS.

- The coordinator and staff conduct the training seminars. Peace Corps volunteers conduct the employment and HIV-AIDS workshops.
- The training seminars are conducted before each module begins; the employment workshop depends on the volunteer's schedule; all are held in La Esperanza. The HIV-AIDS workshop is held during the science module, in La Esperanza and some villages.
- The training seminars allow students to multiply their education in their families and communities; employment skills provide more equality of opportunity to the poor, rural populations; education is paramount to confronting the growing incidence of HIV-AIDS among rural populations in Honduras.
- TROCAIRE includes funding for seminars in our operational budget.

**B. Administration:** approximately 20% of our activities

1. Program administration: providing all documents and reports required by the Department of Education, such as registration, grades, transfers, social work, and providing grade reports and diplomas to students.
  - The volunteer coordinator and the administrator.
  - At the termination of each module, at the end of the school year, and on demand; in La Esperanza.
  - Students outside the traditional system receive an accredited education and are able to transfer to other official programs, including university.
  - Administrator's salary has been paid by TROCAIRE.
2. Financial administration: preparing grant proposals and administering grants from donor organizations.
  - Administrator and volunteer coordinator.
  - Continually, in La Esperanza and Tegucigalpa, Honduras
  - Raises and administers funds to operate the non-profit education program.
  - Administrator has been paid by TROCAIRE.
3. Construction administration: administering funds and overseeing construction of our Education Center.
  - The administrator and coordinator administered the funds; the coordinator and staff oversaw the construction; teams of students provided manual labor.
  - Construction began December, 2006 and was 90% completed by December, 2008, in La Esperanza.
  - A permanent local lends credibility and dignity to an education program that serves a traditionally underserved population. The center also includes low-cost dormitories that allow students from distant villages to participate in educational opportunities not offered in the rural area.
  - Construction funds were provided by JUGEND DRITTE WELT, the land was donated by the town of La Esperanza, and much of the labor was volunteered by teams of our students; the fence on one side was built by students from a private school as part of their social work requirement.

**C. Curriculum development:** approximately 10% of our activities

1. We have augmented most of the books provided by IHER, particularly mathematics, which we have expanded to year-long program instead of a module, English, which we have replaced with our own materials, and Spanish, which we have modified to include creative writing.
  - Mathematics: the coordinator and a volunteer math teacher; English: the coordinator; Spanish: the coordinator and staff.
  - Mathematics: 2005, La Esperanza and Tegucigalpa; English: 2007, La Esperanza; Spanish: 2008, La Esperanza.
  - Due to the poor quality of education found in the rural schools, and the isolation of the villages, our students require more help and better explanation than is found in the books they receive from IHER, so that they have a stronger foundation and are able to apply what they have learned, not only to their daily lives but to more advanced studies if they so choose.
  - Staff salaries and photocopying costs have been provided by TROCAIRE.

***PRESENT ACTIVITIES***

Our present activities remain primarily the same as our past activities, with the following exceptions:

**Educational services:** We are giving more attention to

**Administration:** The construction project with JUGEND DRITTE WELT has terminated. We are gradually finishing construction of the fence and equipping the kitchen and dormitories as money comes available. We are soliciting donations from individuals and organizations that support our goals in order to supplement our operational budget when the funds from TROCAIRE end in April.

**Curriculum development:** we are developing the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and high school English materials. Improvement and updating of all materials continues.

***FUTURE PLANS***

Future activities for the next 5 years will remain primarily the same as present ones, with the following exceptions:

**Educational services:** We plan to hire a part-time coordinator who can also teach some high school classes and the Saturday classes, and who will eventually phase in as the full-time coordinator. The volunteer coordinator will become part-time.

**Administration:** The volunteer coordinator will primarily be involved with grant proposals and fund raising.