



# Un Mundo

Dignity • Community • Self-Sufficiency

## Our Vision

*Un Mundo* is a nonprofit international development organization with a comprehensive and revolutionary approach to its work. We are a movement whose mission is to promote dignity, community and self-sufficiency while facilitating access to health care, education and liveable wages in marginalized Honduran communities in the Cangrejal Valley, such as El Pital. *Un Mundo* promotes local traditions, encourages community leadership, and emphasizes collective ownership of all projects.



## An Education For Seven Special Children

Maynor Mendez was born with cerebral palsy, and so was Yerson Domingaz. Juan Carlos Acosta and his brother Edwin were both born with microcephaly. These kids, some as old as 18, all have the desire to learn and to attend school, but before this year, they had no access to a facility that could handle their learning needs.



When Maynor was born, doctors told his parents he would never speak and perhaps never walk. Remarkably, with no formal education, Maynor began walking at age six and started forming words shortly thereafter. His parents tried including him in the local elementary school, but his speech difficulties and his awkward movements caused teasing from his peers. With no specialized training and so many students in each class, teachers in El Pital are unable to give the personal attention required by children like Maynor. Unable to attend school and isolated from the community, Maynor spent most of the day playing alone on his doorstep, rarely leaving his front yard. He also received little mental or educational support from his family, because his mother is unable to read or write and his father has only a sixth grade education.

**Rate of mental or physical disabilities in the Cangrejal Valley is approximately 3-5%**

Maynor's family is among the 8,000 people living along the Cangrejal Valley, a steep, forested area that stretches along the Cangrejal River of Honduras. Families in this area average a monthly income of \$75, which typically supports a household of between six to eight people. Although Maynor's parents wanted to send him to school, the nearest facility that could serve his needs was an hour away and therefore, inaccessible to the Cangrejal Valley where transportation is unreliable and expensive. Relying on seasonal work, harvesting crops and being the only person able to work in the household of eight, Santos, Maynor's father could not afford the extra expense and time of transporting Maynor to school everyday.



Maynor's story is similar to those of the six other children, who now, through Un Mundo's Special Education Program, attend school daily at the Emilia D'Cuire School for Special Education (pictured above). After seven months the impact has already been tremendous. Witnessing the children learn to write, read, and gain self-confidence has made Un Mundo not only want to expand the program, but start planning for special needs schooling in the Cangrejal Valley itself. Un Mundo has been thrilled with the results and is excited to continue the Cangrejal Special Education Project for the next three years, expanding into the upper communities of the valley offering twenty-three additional scholarships. In addition to the continuation of the scholarships, Un Mundo is also working to legally incorporate the current parent committee—a team that will develop a plan for accessing long-term education for children with disabilities living in this area. Un Mundo will engage experts and professionals who will support the parent committee to create a special education program in one of the local villages or schools.

As for Maynor, now ten, he is beginning to speak more fluently, has improved his motor skills, and is learning the alphabet. When Maynor comes down with a cold, and can't go to school, he cries and puts on his uniform anyway, hoping to convince his parents to let him go.



## Cangrejal Cultural and Arts Festival: Exploring Culture through Art



This year Un Mundo teamed up with art education non-profit Arte Acción, locally based Haitian artist Myriam Piquion and our friends from the organization Guaruma in nearby Las Mangas, to realize a series of art-based educational

projects centered on the theme of exploring cultural identities. In five different communities, this team of educators worked with young students exploring the ways in which various art forms allow us to investigate the world around us and express ourselves. Through music classes, designing and painting a mural, documenting key elements of local stories through photography, and learning about Honduras' own rich indigenous culture, young people of all ages had the opportunity to create their own depictions of daily life in the Cangrejal Valley.

On Saturday, September 5, students from five different communities (Las Mangas, El Pital, Yaruca, Toncontin and Urraco) came together, many for the first time ever - to share the culture and history of their distinct communities through the projects they produced in their workshops. The presentation concluded with the unveiling of the beautiful mural created in Yaruca after the kids from Urraco sang a song they wrote about their community and their dreams for the future. We hope that this event grows into an annual celebration of culture with more students, teachers, and artists participating in 2010.



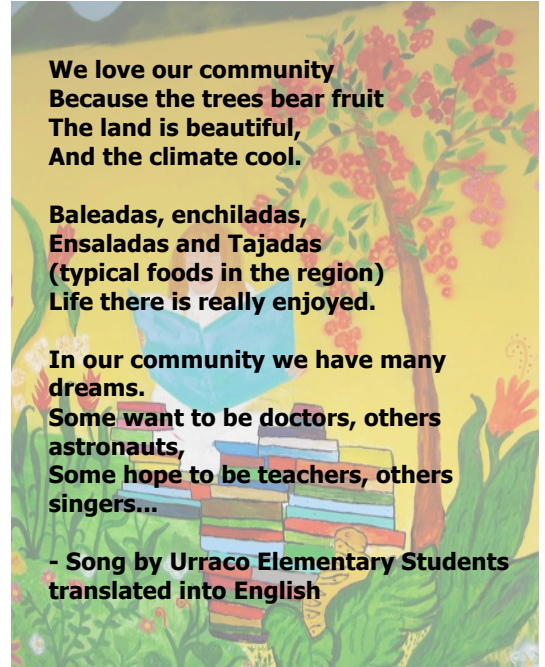
**We love our community  
Because the trees bear fruit  
The land is beautiful,  
And the climate cool.**

**Baleadas, enchiladas,  
Ensaladas and Tajadas  
(typical foods in the region)  
Life there is really enjoyed.**

**In our community we have many  
dreams.**

**Some want to be doctors, others  
astronauts,  
Some hope to be teachers, others  
singers...**

**- Song by Urraco Elementary Students  
translated into English**



## High School Ahead of Schedule and Under Budget!



Fully funded by the Minke Stichting Foundation, the Instituto Oficial Polivalente Elvira Pineda Madrid High School, Un Mundo's largest project to date continues to advance ahead of schedule and under budget! Throughout the course of this year, the computer lab has been completed and fully equipped. Currently the final touches are being completed in the school library, which will also serve as a community space after school hours. The entire project is estimated to be complete by the summer 2010, offering an opportunity for hundreds of students to receive a specialized education in skills such as welding, computer science, home education, electricity, and carpentry. As the finishing touches are put on the high school, Un Mundo has been working with the community to help them organize a library committee to manage and staff the library. The El Pital library committee recently participated in a full day of training conducted by a representative from the Riecken Foundation and made a library visit in San Pedro Sula to learn more about how to manage their library. In August, two of the youth leaders held the first story hour, with a huge turnout of more than fifty kids. The library committee hopes to open its doors to the public in February 2010.

## Uniting the Women of El Pital!

**The Average  
Household  
Monthly Income  
for families in El  
Pital is \$50-\$100.**

In April 2009, Un Mundo helped the women of El Pital start the community's first Women's Group. The main goal of the group is to organize and empower the women of El Pital to acquire the skills necessary to improve their daily lives. Through a series of educational workshops, Un Mundo hopes to engage these women in activities that will cultivate economic self-sufficiency and promote a deeper sense of unity. The majority of women in El Pital, depend solely on the earnings of their spouse or partner for their well-being and that of their children.

Since May 2009, participating women have taken part in a cooking class, have made children's clothing, jewelry, and have learned the art of beekeeping. During the cooking class the women learned the importance of a well-balanced diet as means for improving their families' health, while also exploring economic

opportunities generated by the food industry in this tourist-rich area. The bee-keeping workshop introduced the women to the diverse benefits of small-scale apiaries, such as personal consumption and natural health remedies. The most recent workshops taught women how to use recycled materials, such as old pillowcases and paper to make decorative children's dresses and necklaces, promoting local production of clothing and jewelry.



Workshops such as candle and soap making will continue through 2009. Thereafter, the women will begin to analyze the feasibility of micro or small-business development using the various trades that have been introduced throughout the workshops. Bonding together as women and learning to be economically independent from their spouses offers an amazing opportunity for them to grow in ways that may have been previously unimaginable. With the creativity and energy these women bring to each meeting, the success of a prospering business is only a glimpse of what is possible.





## School Literacy Support

In 2009, at the request of the Director of the La Muralla school, Un Mundo began providing literacy support at this small one-room school. La Muralla is a small community located on the hillsides of the Cangrejil Valley. The community is only accessible by hiking forty-five minutes up the steep mountains to reach the modest adobe and palm homes. A few years ago, the community built its first school, supported by one teacher with over 30 children of all ages and grades. Throughout the year, Un Mundo's education coordinator, Brian Goetz, spent two days each week working closely with the students and teacher. He brought innovative education methods and creative lessons to the school.



## Notes from the Field: Brian Goetz

In almost every Honduran village, town and city where I have been welcomed as a stranger, I have talked with someone who has been deported from the United States. A man, probably 30-something years old, in Las Mangas (near where we live in El Pital) began to cry when I told him I am from Chicago. In English that he learned on the job and not in a school, he said, "It is not good, man, to remind of that place." You see, this man had been deported only a month earlier, forced to leave his wife and two young children behind in that foreign and cold metropolis. What will it take to reduce the temptation to migrate north (and the ensuing inhumane treatment recent immigrants often receive when they arrive), the separation of families for incredibly long periods of time, and the obsession and inferiority complex amongst Hondurans with all things from the North?

It will take functioning public school systems. It will take leadership whose interests are not solely focused on whichever businesses their families control. We have seen the absence of both in recent months, as the current political happenings have illuminated divisions throughout Honduran society. The one-room school in the mountain village of La Muralla where I teach two times a week has been empty for the better part of two months. On average, the regular teacher there shows up one or two days a week, so that many times I arrive to see that only half of the students are there, ready to learn. The teachers' union has been very vocal about its support of Manuel Zelaya's return, resulting in many teachers traveling to Tegucigalpa and other parts of the country to take part in protests. In the Cangrejil Valley, the result has been that the vast majority of elementary-school-age kids have been set back yet another year in their learning. Their last year was plagued by a teachers' strike. For me, the lack of a consistent school schedule highlights the need for groups like Un Mundo to support rural communities by working to expand educational opportunities and creating spaces to learn outside the traditional school day.

Of course, I've grown to love many people here and I struggle to come to terms with my own decision to leave Honduras at the end of this year. When a student in La Muralla greets me in English, a smile comes to my face that

reflects far more than my appreciation that he or she remembers some simple vocabulary left unsatisfied by the standard curriculum. I'm happy to say that I feel I've stoked the flames of that curiosity in the minds of some, even if only to a small degree. Apart from my students, there are a number of individuals here who have taught me far more, I'm sure, than either they or I know. From my friend Dilmer who knows everything there is to know about agriculture and yet views himself as uneducated because he can't read as well as I; to the small handful of teachers who are dedicated to their jobs and show an incredible enthusiasm in spite of great obstacles and a tremendous lack of support; to the countless men and women who, though getting well on in years, still manage to carry their heavy loads of fire wood on their backs for miles, or manage to make a delicious dinner for five unforeseen gringo-guests that appear out of thin air.

When I think about the big questions that we all ask ourselves from time to time, questions like, "What are our proper roles and responsibilities as foreigners in a country like Honduras," or "Is it right for me, as a 'gringo' and as a 'well-off' person, to even be here, perhaps misguidedly?," I sometimes return to a moment that has crystallized in my mind. One day in February, I got an e-mail message from my mom telling me that my grandmother had left this life behind. Unfortunately, having just recently arrived in Honduras, it was not possible for me to return to the United States to mourn with my family and friends. I took a bus back up to El Pital from La Ceiba in the afternoon with roaming thoughts. There's something special about grandmothers, I think. I was sad that I was not with my family – that I wouldn't have an opportunity to partake in that important time of communal grieving. As I stepped off the bus I saw almost everyone I knew from El Pital and some nearby communities in a crowd near the church. The oldest woman in town, the grandmother (*abuelita*) of

some of my new friends, had passed away that morning. She was the grandmother of my friends Koqui and Melvin who invited me to follow them to the cemetery to be with them for the burial. We all had a good healthy cry up there on that hill and in that moment I felt strongly the reality that there really is only one world (*un mundo*), and that notions of national boundaries, first worlds and third worlds, and differences in appearance or in language, only work to make us all forget that we are first and foremost human, and that perhaps the answer to all of our questions is compassion.





**31% of El Pital's population ages 9 and above are illiterate**

## WHAT'S NEW: HELP US BUILD LITERACY IN EL PITAL

Un Mundo has recently partnered with the El Pital high school, the community of El Pital and the Riecken Foundation to develop the internal infrastructure for a community library, which will be located in the new high school. Un Mundo has been working with the community members in El Pital to form a library board of ten community members. This devoted, well-organized committee has begun to lay plans for bringing their community to life through literacy. However, they are still far from reaching their goals of having sufficient resources to open the library. Through the help of generous donors throughout Honduras and the United States, they have been able to collect close to 500 books for their library, yet they still need your help to fully equip this multi-purpose space.



### Help El Pital Build their Community Library

#### YOU CAN HELP! A DONATION OF...

- \$30 will help purchase 4 books
- \$50 will help purchase 6 books
- \$100 will help purchase a rug for story-time
- \$200 will help purchase bookshelves and two tables
- \$350 will help purchase a computer for the librarian
- \$500 will help purchase the satellite for Internet

### THANK YOU Un Mundo Friends & Partners

Un Mundo could not survive without the generous support of devoted volunteers and donors around the world. We are thankful for your continued support and interest in our work. Please let us know what you think about our current projects or if you have a specific skill or service that you think could be useful to our organization.

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Visit us online at  
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