

IMPACT

REPORT



Stories & Statistics from the CARE Learning Tour to Honduras, October 13–17, 2017

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OVERVIEW

In October 2017, a bipartisan delegation of Congressional staffers, technical experts and the media traveled with CARE to see how U.S. investments and partnerships in Honduras are saving lives and improving food and nutrition security for families and communities. Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central America and currently grapples with severe climate shocks as well as high rates of food insecurity, malnutrition, violence and gender inequality. Despite the potential for the country to produce enough food, those living in poverty – particularly women and children – often do not have the necessary tools or knowledge to access nutritious foods and improve their livelihoods. But there are sustainable, achievable solutions. By shaping smart, strategic and coordinated policies, it will result in more effective assistance, save more lives and advance America’s core interests in building a safer and more prosperous world for all.

→ DAY 1

Why Honduras? Setting the Scene

The Learning Tour began in the capital city of Tegucigalpa with a briefing to set the scene on the state of food and nutrition security in Honduras. After visiting several programs, the group closed the day with an evening reception hosted by Heide B. Fulton, the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires. At both events, the delegation heard from local partners and representatives from the U.S. Mission on current development and food insecurity challenges in Honduras. The group heard how the U.S. is collaborating with the Honduran government and local partners is working to identify solutions to addressing the urgent needs of families and smallholder farmers.

→ DAY 2

A Look at Short-Term Interventions to Tackle Food Insecurity

On day two of the Learning Tour, the delegation traveled to Siguatepeque, a city located on the outskirts of the country’s dry corridor region where partners such as the World Food Program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are implementing direct assistance interventions. The group learned how in-kind U.S. food aid commodities and cash assistance are helping families through challenging economic and food insecure times. See below for more information on the programs visited on this day, the impact of these interventions and stories from program participants who have benefited from this assistance.

World Food Program Cash-Based Transfer Program

LOCATION: Siguatepeque, Honduras

BACKGROUND: The World Food Program (WFP) uses cash transfers and vouchers to help Hondurans affected by emergencies and climate shocks such as the major drought the country is experiencing in the dry corridor, which includes the regions in the west and southwest of the country. These cash transfers help ensure that families can purchase food and other household necessities in certain local shops, strengthening the local economy. It also enables them to choose their own food, helping to maintain more dietary diversity and a sense of normal life.

IMPACT: WFP has been working to support Honduran communities since 1970. WFP has a presence in all 18 departments of Honduras, serving a total of 43,000 families throughout the country through this cash assistance program.

DONOR: World Food Program (WFP)



Through the Food for Education program, USDA provides immediate food assistance in 17 departments throughout the Intibucá region. With the support of McGovern-Dole funding, USDA is also able to procure local products when needed and when appropriate.

USDA Food for Education Warehouse and School Feeding Program

LOCATION: Siguatepeque, Honduras

BACKGROUND: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), along with the Social Ministry of the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Copán (CARITAS) and the Central Committee for Water Development in Intibucá (COCEPRADII), is implementing the project “Food for Education” in the Intibucá department of Honduras. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the project seeks to improve literacy rates of children and young adults in Intibucá’s 17 municipalities. In April 2016, the second phase of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program was launched and \$33.7 million was provided by USDA. This second phase of the project aims to provide nutrition support and direct food assistance to thousands of children and mothers in the region.

IMPACT: Since the program began, the Food for Education initiative has benefited more than 54,000 children and 2,000 teachers in 17 municipalities in the department of Intibucá, through educational incentives such as food, transportation, school supplies and school infrastructure. The program also provides school meals for students, technical training for teachers and school administrators and outreach on the value of education. Children who have participated in the program since it began have increased their reading skills by 22 percent.

DONORS: U.S. Department of Agriculture – McGovern-Dole funding

The delegation closed the day with a discussion with U.S. government representatives from USAID and the USDA in Honduras to learn how U.S. investments are being used in responding to short and long-term food insecurity as well as violence and migration driven by insecurity and lack of opportunities.

→ DAY 3

Empowering Small-Scale Farmers and Linking Producers to Local Markets

On the third day, the delegation traveled further into the dry corridor to see how U.S. investments are helping to empower small-scale farmers and connect producers to local markets to increase household incomes and build better livelihoods. The group also met with a group of influential women that are part of a national women’s advocacy network that CARE supports by providing leadership and skills training so they can be empowered to continue advocating for women’s rights and equality at home, amongst their community members and also in the workplace. Here are some of the program highlights from the day:

A Story from the Field

Maria Elena Cruz lives in an area that is prone to severe droughts during the dry seasons and torrential downpours and mudslides. Several years ago during one of Honduras’ most severe periods of drought, Maria’s youngest son fell ill and she was

forced to pull her eldest son out of school to help on the farm in order to generate additional household income to afford medical care for her youngest son. Through USAID’s ACCESS to Production and Nutrition program, Maria and her husband learned about horticulture and larger scale crop production and the importance of having fresh produce to feed her family. With the new, healthier crops – and the water irrigation system that USAID helped her develop – her family increased their crop yields and they now have greater quantities and a greater variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to sell in the local market. They also invested in chickens, ducks and goats to provide another source of healthy protein and dairy for Maria’s family.



A Story from the Field

Marlon Oney Aguilar Rodriguez was forced to drop out of school during a severe drought that took place between 2012 and 2015, which devastated many crops across Honduras, particularly in the dry corridor. Marlon’s family was struggling to produce enough crops to sell or to consume and economic and food security became major challenges. The youngest of eight children, Marlon was the only one of his siblings of school-age and still able to return to school following the severe drought period. Today, Marlon is in the ninth grade, is top of his class and is also president of the school student union. Marlon also volunteers as a tutor and provides support to his peers to encourage better academic performance and to discourage his fellow classmates from dropping out of school. He advocated, through the school’s student union, for the school to secure funds (through USG funding) to create a small library within the school, which can be accessed throughout the day for any of the nearly 215 students between Pre-K and ninth grade that attend the school. After graduating, Marlon plans to continue to his studies beyond secondary school and hopes to one day become a journalist.

USAID Feed the Future Nutritional Education Center

LOCATION: Copán Department, Honduras

BACKGROUND: USAID’s “ACCESS to Production and Nutrition” program uses a market-led approach to agricultural production to sustainably increase productivity and incomes in the southern dry corridor. To generate household income, the project has provided direct technical assistance and training to clients in production, marketing, business skills, finance, certifications and value-added processing. The program focuses on developing local value chains, including production of basic grains, coffee, horticulture, fruit trees and livestock. The project also has provided technical assistance at the household and community levels on nutrition and health, disaster mitigation, natural resource management and renewable energy.

IMPACT: Since May 2015, USAID has helped participating households and small businesses earn more than \$8.6 million in new net income to invest in their homes, farms and communities. The program has also generated \$4.3 million in private sector investment, leading to long-term increases in agricultural production. Through this program, program participants have improved their sanitation and hygiene practices and can now access diverse and quality food, resulting in a 25 percent reduction in the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition among children under five years old. The program has also expanded the coverage of irrigation systems and access to safe drinking water on more than 13,500 acres of land, benefiting more than 20,000 people.

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► Since the program began, nearly 4,000 households have moved above the national poverty line, of which nearly 3,000 were lifted out of extreme poverty. Furthermore, nearly 2,000 families increased their incomes by 500 percent, from less than \$ 1.25 to more than \$2.42 per person per day. In 2016, the Feed the Future initiative throughout the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region directly benefited more than 400,000 rural households and spurred nearly \$27 million (USD) in new sales on the continent. Feed the Future programming brought small-scale entrepreneurs increased income opportunities through more than \$27 million (USD) in new agricultural and rural loans and helped leverage more than \$9 million (USD) in new private sector investment in the agriculture sector. The program also reached more than 718,000 children in the LAC region with nutrition training and community outreach.

DONORS: U.S. Agency for International Development

A Story from the Field

Lourdes and Glenda Medina are sisters who joined USAID's Access to Markets program in 2013 when they began receiving training on small business ownership and entrepreneurship. Both women are now widows after having each lost their husbands under violent circumstances. However, with the technical support of USAID, eventually the sisters decided to begin producing plantain chips for sale in order to increase their household incomes and support their families. The sisters were successful at expanding their operations and production capacity and in just three years, went from producing 150 pounds of plantains per week to 1,250 pounds a week. The two have plans to grow their business and hope to see their product on the shelves of local supermarkets and possibly in grocery stores well beyond just Honduras in the near future.



USAID ACCESS to Markets Program

LOCATION: Chalmeca, Honduras

BACKGROUND: USAID is currently implementing "ACCESS to Markets", a five-year Feed the Future activity that is increasing agriculture sector growth and facilitating access to a diverse and quality diet. The program also works to improve sanitation and hygiene practices and work with partners to expand access to maternal and child health services. From 2010-2015, USAID worked with 165,000 men, women and children to lift them out of poverty and malnutrition through access to economic development opportunities, including new markets and improved health and nutrition practices. The project helped clients generate nearly \$40.5 million in new income by expanding off-farm micro enterprise and employment opportunities. During this period, the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition among client children under the age of five decreased by roughly 40 percent.

IMPACT: More than \$8 million in farm sales have been generated to date and nutrition has improved for 18,000 client households in the northern dry corridor.

DONORS: U.S. Agency for International Development

→ DAY 4

Sustainable Solutions to Long-Term Food Security

On the fourth day of the trip, the delegation saw how investments in programs that foster long-term food security are key in sustainably lifting communities out of poverty. The group saw how organizations like CARE are working to link small- and medium-scale producers to even larger markets to strengthen household incomes and help make communities and families more resilient to climate shocks.

CARE-Cargill Nourishing the Future Program

LOCATION: Guiral Community, Honduras

BACKGROUND: In 2008, Cargill and CARE launched a five-year partnership to reach men, women and children in rural communities with nutritional, educational and economic opportunities for growth. The program works with communities in key areas to foster gender-equitable food and nutrition security. This is accomplished by building the capacities of marginalized populations to prosper and to help them avoid exhausting resources to recover from climate shocks, including drought and irregular weather patterns. The initiative provides training, skills development and market access for farmers; enhanced education and nutritional support for children; and access to social services like health care and safe drinking water for communities.

IMPACT: Over the past eight years, CARE and Cargill have collaborated to help improve the lives of more than 300,000 people globally. The CARE-Cargill program reaches more than 250,000 people in Central America through the Nourishing the Future project, including providing resources for 100,000 farmers and nutrition education for 130,000 children and their families. Between 2013 and 2016, Nourishing the Future fostered more prosperous and resilient farm communities across 66 of the most marginalized communities throughout Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, improving the lives of more than 28,900 people directly and indirectly. The partnership more than doubled household incomes in Guatemala and Honduras, increased farmers' access to credit, improved production yield despite climate challenges, fostered healthier diets and nearly halved the rate of food insecurity in Guatemala. Furthermore, CARE and Cargill work to ensure the sustainability of this progress by ultimately transferring ownership of the programs to schools, extension services, national governments and municipalities.

DONORS: Cargill; CARE USA



A Story from the Field

Hivis Erasmo Vasquez is a smallholder farmer and a participant in one of CARE's small savings groups. Hivis

and his family live in the Santa Barbara Department of Honduras in an area that falls just inside of the country's dry corridor. After receiving technical support from the Nourishing the Future program, Hivis recently began planting a new yellow corn seed variety that is more drought resistant and that produces two ears of corn as opposed to the traditional white corn variety that only produces one ear. As a result, Hivis now produces nearly six times more tons of corn each season than before due to the health and resistance of this new seed variety. Hivis and his wife also recently attended a new training to cultivate tilapia farms – one of Honduras' key exports – to diversify their production and increase their household income. They are excited about this new endeavor and are in the process of building a water pool to house the tilapia farm.

USAID Youth Violence Prevention Program

LOCATION: San Pedro Sula, Honduras

BACKGROUND: In response to security challenges in the region, particularly in Honduras, USAID supports community-based efforts to prevent crime and gang activity, support highest risk youth, strengthen community-police relationships, provide school-based violence prevention programs, life-skills training and vocational education to at-risk youth. Activities aim to create community cohesion, strengthen local governance, improve local infrastructure and educate and empower youth to address the root causes of gang violence and gang activity. Through partnerships with the Government of Honduras, local governments, civil society organizations and the private sector, USAID efforts target select urban areas in Honduras with the highest homicide rates. The program also targets youth that have recently migrated from rural areas who may be particularly vulnerable to violence and pressure from gangs.

IMPACT: Through community outreach centers, USAID, in partnership with local government and law enforcement authorities and community-based organizations, supports a network of 65 outreach centers throughout Honduras, including in Tegucigalpa, Comayagüela, San Pedro Sula, Villanueva, Choloma, Tela, La Ceiba and Puerto Lempira. Through the social projects that USAID supports through community-based organizations in Honduras, more than 42,000 children benefited in 2016 and the projects have helped prevent youth involvement in gang activity.

DONOR: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

Throughout the trip, the delegation saw firsthand the important role that U.S. investments play in providing immediate food assistance, as well as supporting longer-term development by building the capacity of farmers to overcome shocks and sustainably produce enough nutritious food to feed their families.

→ POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Investments in Women and Girls

CARE advocates for the U.S. government to integrate gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment throughout its foreign assistance programs. By placing an emphasis on empowering women and girls to exercise agency through education, economic opportunity and the means necessary to combat gender-based violence, we can support communities as they sustainably lift themselves out of poverty.

The International Affairs budget is roughly one percent of the U.S. budget and it is the government's primary funding source for international programs for both emergency response and long-term development. Proposals to dramatically cut this important funding raise serious concerns about the future of American leadership and jeopardize how we will protect our gains and continue benefits of addressing global poverty. U.S. foreign assistance programs save millions of lives every year, address the root causes of poverty, decrease dependency and

build stronger, more resilient societies. CARE advocates for greater accountability and transparency of these funds so that programs are more effective and efficient.

If we are to solve the issue of hunger in the long-term, we must craft policies that focus on supporting communities to become self-sufficient. **CARE advocates for U.S. food and nutrition security programs to empower small-scale farmers, many of whom are women, to gain access to nutritious food and to sustainably produce enough food to feed their families.** Smart programming must focus on empowering the vulnerable, take a community-led approach, improve nutrition, especially for women and children, and build communities' ability to adapt to shocks and stresses such as drought, extreme temperatures and flooding. Building this capacity is a critical step to achieving the goal of zero hunger.

Since 1954, U.S. food aid has fed more than three billion people in over 150 countries. Yet as the world faces some of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our times – including 30 million people at risk of famine – it is imperative that we continue to maximize our impact and potential to ensure global food and nutrition security. To do so, we must provide the right kind of food aid to those in need – whether it is U.S. grown food, locally grown food, food vouchers or access to financial assistance. No single form of assistance fits in all situations. For example, using vouchers in areas that are struggling to produce their own food can cause prices to rise, just like delivering U.S. commodities to areas that are successfully growing food can cause prices to drop. It is vital that we use flexibility and assess local markets first to deliver the most effective form of assistance.

Photos: All Images: Josh Estey/CARE

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If you are interested in learning more about CARE's Learning Tours program, please contact:

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