



# NEWS FROM HONDURAS

Honduras Community Support Corporation

December 2010

HELPING RURAL HONDURANS TO LIVE BETTER ON THE LAND  
AND TO PROTECT THE LAND THEY LIVE ON

## FECOVESO IN 2010

FECOVESO continues to expand its capacity and visibility – through fundraising and interaction with local government as well as through its expanding watershed holdings and support for community projects.

Fundación Eco Verde Sostenible (FECOVESO), the Honduran non-profit organized by HCSC, is made up of elected representatives of communities whose watersheds have been purchased through HCSC funding, along with 3 outside members, and Nola, representing HCSC. All watershed land acquired with HCSC funds is owned by FECOVESO as a locally controlled land trust.



FECOVESO is also a community development organization, responding to project requests from communities and making funding recommendations to HCSC. Our long-term goal is to empower this organization as a permanent, independent institution in northwest Honduras.

**FUNDRAISING.** FECOVESO is supplementing the financial support that it receives from HCSC with local fundraising activities. Two raffles were held this year, with winners receiving a bicycle in one case and a radio in the other. Tickets were sold by Board members – who, in the process, also had the opportunity to tell more local people about the organization. A total of 3,475 lempira (\$184) was raised, enhancing FECOVESO’s ability to make grants for community projects.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

The new administration of the Municipalidad de Omoa (a county-sized jurisdiction that includes most of the small communities with which HCSC and FECOVESO have worked) has reached out to FECOVESO and indicated a willingness to support its work in significant ways. This administration is familiar with FECOVESO’s work in part because some of its officials are members of communities where FECOVESO owns watershed land or has supported other community projects. This familiarity was increased when Municipal Environmental Officer Gustavo Cabrera – together with Roger Flores of the National Institute for Forestry Conservation – attended the October Board meeting to learn more about FECOVESO’s work and to review their own work for Board members.

Currently FECOVESO and HCSC are working with “The Muni,” as it is locally known, to arrange for municipal engineers to measure and create maps of newly acquired watershed land (a necessary and sometimes expensive step in the process of establishing legal title to the land).

Discussions are also under way regarding municipal assistance in making a regional map of all FECOVESO land holdings. Once such a map is completed, FECOVESO will request that the municipality declare all of its watershed lands to be “Protected Zones,” which will provide further long-term assurance that these watersheds will remain protected. The municipality has also indicated a willingness to produce signs to be posted on the boundaries of parcels, stating FECOVESO ownership and protected status of newly acquired watersheds.

The Director of the municipality’s Community Development Office has also requested a meeting with the FECOVESO Board. In the past, the relationship with this department has been primarily a matter of the municipality referring communities to HCSC and FECOVESO for assistance, but we are looking forward to a more mutual relationship in the future.



FECOVESO BOARD MEETING WITH CABRERA AND FLORES

## WATERSHEDS

### NUEVA VIDA

Purchase of a 26-acre parcel of land this year completed the protection of the watershed from which Nueva Vida and three neighboring mountain communities draw their water. Before Nueva Vida had begun construction of its gravity-feed water system almost a decade ago, the community had bought, from the same owner, a parcel of less than two acres on which they built the system's dam and catchment area. HCSC provided some funding to help complete the system, and later funded FECOVESO's acquisition of 67 acres of land higher in the watershed from two other owners. But the owner of the 26 acres immediately surrounding the parcel where the dam was located (and adjacent to the 67 acres) held out for a per-acre price that was much higher than he had charged for the small parcel – and much higher than the going price for land in the general area.

After years of patient negotiation FECOVESO got the owner to agree to sell for a price that was about 60% of what he had originally asked. Though the price was still significantly more than the going per-acre price, FECOVESO and HCSC agreed to pay this amount in order to secure the protection of a crucial piece of the Nueva Vida watershed.



NUEVA VIDA DAM

### SAN FRANCISCO

For the small mountain community of San Francisco, HCSC funded FECOVESO's acquisition of 23 acres of land to protect the watershed from which the community is now able to draw water. The acquisition entailed purchases of four contiguous parcels from separate owners. HCSC also funded the purchase of barbed wire and other materials so that the community could fence the newly acquired land to prevent cattle from damaging the vegetation and polluting the water.

San Francisco does not yet have a fully developed water system, but FECOVESO has funded the purchase of enough flexible plastic tubing to provide a temporary system to bring water to the community.

With FECOVESO gaining title to this watershed land, San Francisco became a member of the organization, with a right to elect one of its residents to serve on the FECOVESO Board of Directors.



WATERSHED IN THE CLOUDS

### CORINTO

As reported in last year's newsletter, HCSC and FECOVESO had acquired critical parcels of land to protect the water source for the village of Corinto on the Guatemala border, and had begun the reforestation of this land with help from Honduran naval cadets. This year HCSC funded the purchase of materials for the fencing of the watershed.



CHILDREN ENJOYING TEMPORARY WATER IN THE COMMUNITY

## SCHOOLS

**LA VENADA** is a fast-growing community on the highway just outside the village of Omoa. Although it is somewhat more prosperous than most of the communities assisted by HCSC, its resources had been stretched thin by its effort to address expanding needs – including installation of electricity, expansion of the water system and improvement of road access. The school had been expanded to two rooms, but already needed a third. HCSC purchased the cement blocks needed to build a third school room.



TEACHERS MEETING IN LA VENADA'S NEW SCHOOLROOM

**MASCA** is the westernmost of the coastal villages that were settled more than two centuries ago by the Garifuna people, descendants of escaped African slaves and natives of Caribbean islands, with a unique culture derived from both sources. Today the community has ambitious plans for expanding its school and is attracting students from nearby communities and becoming more integrated. Although we did not feel that it needed extensive help, we wanted to encourage these energetic efforts. HCSC was able to cover the cost of desks that were needed before an already completed new classroom could be used.

**SANTA TERESA**, high in the mountains on the Guatemalan border, had begun construction of a schoolroom but had run out of materials (and money) by the time school was supposed to open in February. HCSC provided materials for a floor and roof and woven wire for the window openings. Also, as we do for most of the small mountain schools we assist, we provided basic school supplies (paper, pencils, etc) – along with donated clothing that HCSC Board and friends bring to Honduras with their checked baggage.



MASCA CHILDREN LEARNING ABOUT HCSC

**NUEVA VIDA.** Last fall's earthquake had destroyed the latrines serving the school in the mountain community of Nueva Vida. HCSC purchased the materials so that community residents could rebuild the latrines.



BEGINNING THE REBUILDING OF EARTHQUAKE-DAMAGED LATRINES

**CHACHAGUALA ARRIBA**, one of the most remote villages we have worked with, connected its school to their existing water system through piping provided by FECOVESO.

**TEACHERS BONUSES.** As in past years, HCSC awarded \$100 bonuses to teachers in remote schools who had completed a full year of work to the satisfaction of their community. Bonuses were given to each of the two teachers in Las Flores and to the single teacher in Nueva Vida. The national government pays very limited salaries to elementary school teachers (and does not supervise them). Remote communities have a difficult time retaining teachers' services for a full year. The bonuses provide an important bit of additional incentive.

## WATER SYSTEMS



THE KITCHEN SINK. IN THE WARM CLIMATE OF HONDURAS, MANY HOUSEHOLD TASKS ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE OUT-OF-DOORS.

**NUEVA ESPERANZA.** All of the households in this poor neighborhood on the edge of the village of Omoa depended on just four public faucets for their water, which they then had to carry to their homes. The water was supplied by the Omoa system, but those in charge of the system were about to cut off service because the public faucets created mosquito-breeding wet areas that were considered to be a health hazard, and because residents were not paying for this communal service.

In response to a request from the community, HCSC purchased 200 lengths of pipe, which community residents then installed to bring water directly to each household. The families receiving this service now pay their share of the cost of maintaining the system.



NUEVA ESPERANZA IS READY TO GO TO WORK!

## OFFICE AND EQUIPMENT

Last fall, FECOVESO's office (in a building provided by Nola and Kirby) was left with cracked walls and other damage as the result of an earthquake. A few weeks after the quake, a break-in and robbery left the organization without its computers and printer. The structural damage has now been repaired, and the security of the office was greatly improved when Nola's old friends Felix and Chayo (who is also a FECOVESO Board member) moved into the building as permanent caretakers. The stolen equipment has been replaced with equipment provided by HCSC donors and a group that reconditions computers for use by charitable nonprofits.

## CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS.

Three members of the FECOVESO Board of Directors, including the new President of the Board, Jorge Alberto Chavez, attended the 3-day Project Honduras conference in Copan Ruinas again this fall. They were excited to meet the new president of Honduras and his wife at the conference, as well as representatives of many other organizations working in Honduras.



FECOVESO DIRECTORS JOSE VISITACIÓN AND JORGE CHAVEZ (AT LEFT) SHARING INFORMATION AT THE PROJECT HONDURAS CONFERENCE

## IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP...

We are an all-volunteer organization, and we operate with very low overhead. We put your tax-deductible donations to work directly for the people of Honduras – and we depend completely on those donations to support our work. You can find more information, including past editions of this newsletter, at our web site

[www.hcsc-honduras.org](http://www.hcsc-honduras.org)

Your contributions can be sent to...

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