

TECHNOEDUCA: A MODEL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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1. Background to Educatodos

The USAID Mission in Honduras has identified the rural Honduran indigenous and ethnic population as one of its focal points for the infusion of development support. The mission recognizes the dire conditions faced by the population, the impact that it can have in strengthening democracy and human rights, and the need to offer the poorest of the poor a way forward. Without intervention, their human condition is unlikely to change. To support this mission's strategic objectives for this sector of Honduran Society, a collaborative relation was proposed between Morgan State University (MSU), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Baltimore, Maryland and the Universidad Tecnologica de Honduras (UTH) in San Pedro Sula.

2. Goal, Objective and Implementation Activities

The Goals of the partnership are 1) to enhance the social capital of Honduran rural communities, particularly among ethnic minorities through increasing access to formal education and new technologies and 2) to support the efforts of young adults, particularly Afro-descendants and other underserved populations, to improve intercultural relations and ease their integration into the global economy.

In order to reach the above broad goals, the main objective of the partnership is to provide a platform for the establishment of three pilot Community Technology and e-Learning Centers (CTELS) to address the education access and technology training needs of young adults in poor, rural communities in Honduras. Through the activities of CTELS the partnership will offer these communities access to the curriculum Content of the USAID funded EDUCATODOS program. MSU will share equipment and e-learning with UTH and provide training and technical assistance to UTH faculty and students for the establishment and operation of an asynchronous distance learning education program. Through the partnership, MSU will provide poor rural communities with software, connectivity and training for the operation of the CTELS.

This project proposes to install and operate three e-learning Centers in select community location in Honduras, with the vision of expanding these centers to San Andres, Columbia, Panama and Nicaragua. These telecenters will serve as a mechanism for the introduction of online distance learning which will provide educational programs relevant to the problems faced by rural communities. Initially the programs will be focused on improving racial tolerance and fostering mutual respect among distinct ethnic groups.

Through the Centers, UTH will offer their students access to MSU continuing education credits in ESL and subsequently in other areas. Additionally, UTH in collaboration with MSU, will provide rural young adults with training on basic computer use and Internet research tools. To this end, MSU will develop an Afro-Centric Social Studies curriculum, which in addition to educating youth on the African Diaspora and Honduran History and Culture will strengthen students' computer skills by incorporating the use of the technology in the delivery of these courses. At the conclusion of this pilot initiative, through the use Blackboard Course Development technology, young adults from the targeted communities will be able to continue their education beyond that which is available in their communities by enrolling in the UTH asynchronous distance learning education program. At the same time, UTH students will be afforded the opportunity to take classes in other programs not available at their schools through distance education articulation agreements. The Afro Centric Social Studies program will be adapted and included in the UTH distance learning system, thus making it available to similar students throughout the entire Afro-Latin American Diaspora.