

Episcopal Life THIS WEEK

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people?

Educating children can create people of vision

Improved education and poverty reduction go hand in hand

Third in a 10-part series

By Heewoo Han

You can see in their eyes that children are filled with wonder. This was especially true of the children in Honduras whose clear brown eyes were always wide open, as if to soak in all the vivid colors of their beautiful country. Some retain the hopeful twinkle throughout their lifetime, but more often, abject poverty robs them of their luster, and weariness replaces it.

In Honduras, poverty drives many children to the streets to scavenge for edible garbage, to the sweatshops and the fields for cheap manual labor, and sells some children for sexual exploitation. Studies show that education is one of the most effective ways to combat poverty, and the church must do everything in its power to educate the 113 million children in the developing world who are likely never to set foot in a school.

The connection between education and poverty reduction is well documented. Education reduces deprivation and vulnerability; it helps lift earning potential, expands labor mobility, promotes the health of parents and children, reduces child mortality, and affords the disadvantaged a voice in society and the political system. Recent research shows that education also fosters improvements in the quality of social institutions and communities. A strategy paper by the World Bank notes that “nations in which most of the population is literate and all children complete at least a basic education have higher quality institutions, stronger democratic processes, and, as a consequence, more equitable developmental policies.”

A child’s eyes twinkle because she imagines a world replete with things that astonish her and a future that is good; but the harsh realities often rob her of everything, including her imagination. Always having had a world that is against them, many cannot imagine a better world. Education fights this. At the least, education gives people the basic knowledge so they will know when others exploit them; and at its best, it allows people to envision a just world and their role in building it.

Let us pray for schools and centers of learning, for those who lack access to basic education, and for the light of knowledge to blossom and shine in the lives of all God’s people.

- Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations

The Anglican Communion has had a long involvement in education in the developing world; Anglican missionaries built schools and hospitals everywhere they went. Despite the negative role that they might have played in the past, these schools are now an integral part of the education systems of many developing countries. In Kenya, for instance, the number of religious schools established was so extensive that at Kenya’s independence in 1963, missionary schools were the main means of public education, according to a 1996 article in the Journal of Church and State. In Honduras, the Episcopal Church’s numerous bilingual schools provide top-quality instruction unavailable through its strike-prone public school system.

But the church must do more. The church that proclaims the risen Christ as its center must seek to bring education to enable people to imagine the world where Christ reigns. ■



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Learn more about it

- **ONE Anglican**
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ONE/>
- **Educational resources from Episcopal Relief and Development**
http://er-d.org/programs_36756_ENG_HTML.htm
- **Young Adult Service Corps**
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/30703_1700_ENG_HTML.htm
- **World Bank “Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper” on the connection between education and poverty reduction**
<http://www1.worldbank.org/education/globaleducationreform/pdf/Education%20Chapter%20Sourcebook.pdf>
- **Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation**
<http://e4gr.org>

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