

Canadian Peacemakers nternational

December 2023

Newsletter

Honduras

Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL)

CPI's CAL program in Honduras is administered by its partner agency Asociación Confraternidad Honduras (ACH). In 2023, ACH opened five new satellite schools and reopened one that had been closed during the pandemic. The total number of students enrolled in all of the schools was 773.

Although a CAL school does not have teachers in the conventional sense, facilitators are present to assist students with learning how to use computers and access the educational materials stored on them. ACH organizes an annual conference for facilitators to upgrade their skills and share ideas. In 2023, 45 facilitators and guests attended the conference, held this year in the city of Siguatepeque. Two of the invited speakers were experts in education and technology. ACH staff also presented a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis workshop to facilitators from seven satellite schools in the municipality of Santa Cruz de Yojoa.

Through an alliance between ACH and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 263 students attending ACH schools received food kits. Educational kits were also distributed to 120 students from communities in Comayagua and Cortez.

The Honduran national holiday on September 15 marks the anniversary of the independence of the five Central American provinces of Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica from Spain in 1821. (Honduras did not become an independent state until 1838). Students in the CAL schools celebrated the day by making traditional costumes of Honduran indigenous peoples, which comprise nearly 10% of the total population.

Sea Can Shipment

A project initiated by Board Director Harold Warkentin in 2019 is on the verge of completion as a sea can has been fully loaded with more than 11,000 kg of equipment and materials for CPI's education and vocational training projects in Honduras. After the documentation required for importation has been accepted by Honduran customs officials, the container will be shipped to the Caribbean port of Puerto Cortés. From there, it will be hauled to CPI's main campus in Santa Cruz de Yojoa, where the contents will be unloaded and distributed as needed. The empty container will join another sea can already at the campus, and both will then be converted into a vocational training facility.

Harold and fellow Director Gordon Baergen, with the assistance of other Board members and volunteers, solicited and collected donations, which included 1-m³ plastic tanks ("cubes"), computers, sewing machines, bicycles, and shop tools, from various sources in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Harold personally serviced most of the sewing machines to ensure they were in good working order. The bikes were also inspected and repaired as required. Chain-link fencing was also purchased for the campus in Santa Cruz.



Gordon Baergen (left) and Harold Warkentin (right) in front of the filled sea can.

The first step in the project was to pick up 36 cubes from Cargill Canada in Saskatoon and bring them back to Edmonton for cleaning. Three of the cubes were packed with computers, clothing, and quilts and sent in two emergency aid shipments to Honduras: two cubes in 2021 and one in

2023. Subsequently, 24 cubes were filled with 500 computers, 110 sewing machines, 115 quilts, sewing materials, clothing, and a large assortment of tools. These cubes, along with 70 bikes and 800 ft. of fencing were then loaded into the sea can. Added to the shipment were two cubes filled with equipment needed by Lead with Seeds, another Edmonton-based aid organization that is active in Honduras.

Fundraising Concert

A concert to raise funds to ship the sea can to Honduras was held on August 27 at the Mennonite Heritage Farm in Sherwood Park, Alberta. About 225 people attended the concert, which featured soprano Merrill Tanner, accompanied by classical guitarist Ernst Birss; soprano Lore Bellman, accompanied by pianist Loretta Dueck; and the vocal group *Take 5*, accompanied by fiddler Alfie Myhre. The concert was followed by a barbeque.

A total of about \$22,000, most of it in donations, was raised. This figure is higher than what will be required to ship the sea can and the surplus will be used for costs associated with renovating the containers into usable educational facilities.



Take 5 and fiddler Alfie Myhre perform at the fundraising concert in August

2024 Learning Tour to Honduras

Veteran tour leaders Gordon and Wendy Baergen are planning to lead another Learning Tour to Honduras in 2024. The tour is scheduled for March 24 - April 10 (including travel days to and from Honduras) and will feature visits to:

- CAL schools, including the main campus in Santa Cruz de Yojoa; satellite schools in the remote mountain villages of San Antonio del Norte, Guajiquiro, and Las Delicias; the satellite school in Santa Elena; and an independent school for handicapped children;

- the farm villages of Tapiquiales, constructed by CPI, and Plan Grande, built by CPI and Habitat for Humanity;
- tourist sites, including Cerro Azul Meámbar National Park (PANACAM), the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Copan Ruinas, the Luna Jaguar hot pools, and the El Cojan hydroelectric dam;
- several farms.

As has been the case in the past, participants will have the option of taking a four-day excursion to a resort on Roatan Island.

The estimated cost of \$2,500 for the tour includes return air fare from Edmonton via Houston; all in-country accommodations, meals, transportation, and entry fees to tourist attractions; and a tax-deductible donation of \$500. The optional excursion to Roatan Island is not included. Anyone interested in participating should contact Gordon (gdbaergen@gmail.com) or Wendy (wbaergen@hotmail.com) as soon as possible.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Kenya

CPI’s partner agency in Kenya, Africa Peace Ministry Institute (APMI) currently operates two schools in Ngong, a suburb of the capital Nairobi. Before its affiliation with CPI in 2022, APMI’s only school in Ngong offered a mission leadership program, which included an introduction to micro-business, and vocational training. An introductory computer course was added after APMI began its partnership with CPI. This school is situated close to a large slum and its vocational courses attract young women with children. A generous donor has provided the funds to build a childcare centre that will allow the mothers to concentrate on their learning. Another donation of €23,000, from the German aid organization *Mennonitische Hilfe*, has been used to create a fund that will provide loans to graduates to buy the equipment needed for them to take up their trades.



The newly constructed addition for CAL at the APMI school in Ngong

The second school is located on the site of the JuaKali Mechanics and Artisans Association Centre, a trade school. APMI's CAL program, begun in 2023, offers a video library that the students use to learn the theoretical aspects of the trades for which they are training. The facility also contains a cybercafé that is used by the students to access the internet.

Plans for expanding the CAL program in Kenya include the opening of schools in Migori in 2024 and in Madiany when funding becomes available. These two towns in western Kenya are close to Lake Victoria and the borders with Uganda and Tanzania.



The Democratic Republic of the Congo

CPI's school in Kikwit was officially opened in February, 2023, and is administered by CPI's partner agency CALCongo. It offers a CAL program based on the entire elementary and high school curriculum of the Congolese Mennonite Brethren Church, as well as vocational sewing instruction.

By the beginning of November, enrollment in the two programs had increased to 105 and 15 students, respectively.



Kikwit police officers in CAL class

Students of all ages (the oldest is 70) and with a variety of backgrounds attend the school. The headmaster and lead facilitator is Tony Blanchard, a specialist in information technology. Tony made the arrangements for local police officers to attend the school in response to a request from the local police superintendent. The

latter had become aware of the existence of the CAL school in his community and wanted his men to get an introduction to computers.

Vocational training in the repair of motorcycles and moto-taxis (also known as tuk-tuks) will commence at the school after the conversion of a 40-ft. sea can into a classroom is completed. The container was donated to CPI by the Westside Community Church in Morden, Manitoba and shipped to Kikwit filled with agricultural and medical equipment, along with computers for the school. Renovations to the container began in October.



The container that is being converted into a vocational classroom at the school in Kikwit. It is dedicated to the memory of 19-year-old Danny Berg, a member of the Westside Community Church, who was present at the official opening of the school in February. He died in an industrial accident after returning to Manitoba.

CPI Governance

2023 CPI Annual General Meeting

The 2023 AGM was held on June 11 at Board Vice-Chair Phil Gaudet's farm near Edmonton. The formal proceedings were preceded by a barbeque and music performed by a group of several CPI Board members and supporters. Luis Vasquez, a native Honduran who was a guide and interpreter on several Learning Tours and is now living in Missouri, presented a tribute to CPI's contributions to his home country by video link.

The Board of Directors saw a number of changes at the AGM. Pierre Amyotte, appointed as Interim Director in December, 2022, was elected to the Board for a two-year term, as were incumbents Rick Bérubé, Michelle Lacoursière, and Zaher Zhra. Leaving the Board were Wendy Baergen, Lindsay Heckman, and Olga Ochoa. A Board member since 2015, Wendy did not stand for re-election, but will continue to be involved in organizing and leading Learning Tours to Honduras.

The Annual Report for 2022 was prepared by outgoing Interim Executive Director Ron Dyck and is available for downloading from the CPI web site at:

<https://www.canadianpeacemakers.org/annual-reports>



Musical entertainment at the 2023 AGM

CPI Leadership

Long-time Board Chair Rick Bérubé stepped down from his post in June, but will remain as a Director. He was succeeded by Gordon Baergen, who, in turn, was replaced as Treasurer by Pierre Amyotte. We thank Rick for his many years of leadership as Chair.

Interim Executive Director Ron Dyck retired from active service with CPI in June. He joined the Board in 2018 and became Interim Executive Director in 2021. We are grateful to Ron for his many contributions to CPI in his various roles over the years as Director, Board Co-Chair, and Executive Director. Dave Hubert and Suzanne Gross remain as Program Directors for Sub-Saharan Africa and Honduras, respectively.

CPI Restructuring

After CPI expanded its CAL program to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2021, the Board became increasingly aware that differences in the visions and operational requirements for the Honduras and Africa programs were such that the two programs would be administered more effectively under separate governance structures. Therefore, the Board and Program Directors agreed to separate one of the programs from CPI.

In its formative years in the mid-2000s, CPI had close ties with the *Sombrilla International Development Society*, an Edmonton-based NGO managing aid projects in Latin America, including Guatemala and El Salvador. These two countries share borders with Honduras and are obvious candidates for the eventual expansion of CPI's CAL program. The past association with Sombrilla and its involvement in Central America were the two principal factors that led the CPI Board to approach the Sombrilla Board and propose the integration of the Honduras CAL program into their organization. This offer was received enthusiastically by Sombrilla and negotiations about the terms of the union were initiated in September, 2023.

Since then, the two Boards have been working diligently toward achieving a partnership agreement by January 1, 2024. CPI's acceptance of the agreement is subject to the continued administrative and financial oversight of the Honduras program by several members of the current CPI Board and the Honduras Country Director, a condition that has been accepted by Sombrilla. Until the separation of the two programs is complete, the CPI Board and the Honduras and African Program Directors will continue to provide oversight and guidance so as to avoid any disruption to the programs or erosion of confidence in the partner agencies that deliver these programs.

Donations

The CPI Board wishes to reassure donors that there will be no change in how their financial gifts are spent. Until the separation becomes official, donations to CPI for Honduras and Sub-Saharan Africa will be allocated as designated; undesignated donations will go to CPI's general fund and be distributed to the two programs as needed. Beginning in 2024, all donations to CPI will be used to fund the Sub-Saharan Africa program; donors wishing to support the Honduras CAL program should direct their gifts to the Sombrilla International Development Society.

The financial support of individual donors is essential for ensuring the success of CPI's programs. Tax receipts will be issued for gifts of at least \$20 (CRA Charitable # 868063090RR0001). Donations can be made by:

1. Sending a cheque payable to: Canadian Peacemakers International

P.O. Box 42123 Millbourne
Edmonton, AB
Canada T6K 4C4

2. Making automatic monthly withdrawals from your bank account (send a void check to the above address).
3. Making an E-transfer to cpi.office.donations@gmail.com (include your name and address to receive a charitable receipt).
4. Donating at:
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/association-of-canadian-peacemakers-international-canada/> (monthly giving can also be arranged here).

Note: The Board, Executive Director, and Program Directors serve in volunteer capacities and receive no remuneration.