

The future will be better

A tracer study of CCF's Early Stimulation Programme in Honduras

Cristina Nufio de Figueroa, Myrna Isabel Mejía Ramirez
and José Bohanerges Mejía Urquía



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The Bernard van Leer Foundation, established in 1949, is based in the Netherlands. We actively engage in supporting early childhood development activities in around 40 countries. Our income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958.

Our mission is to improve opportunities for vulnerable children younger than eight years old, growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. The objective is to enable young children to develop their innate potential to the full. Early childhood development is crucial to creating opportunities for children and to shaping the prospects of society as a whole.

We fulfil our mission through two interdependent strategies:

- Making grants and supporting programmes for culturally and contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood development;
- Sharing knowledge and expertise in early childhood development, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Foundation currently supports about 150 major projects for young children in both developing and industrialised countries. Projects are implemented by local actors which may be public, private or community-based organisations. Documenting, learning and communicating are integral to all that we do. We are committed to systematically sharing the rich variety of knowledge, know-how and lessons learned that emerge from the projects and networks we support. We facilitate and create a variety of products for different audiences about work in the field of early childhood development.

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November 2004

Following Footsteps

reports of studies tracing the footsteps of former participants in early childhood programmes

About Following Footsteps

Following Footsteps are reports of efforts to trace former participants of early childhood projects and programmes. They are studies that follow the progress of the children, their families, the workers, the communities or the organisations five or more years down the line to find out how they are faring. Some of the programmes were originally supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation; others were not. Some of the studies were commissioned by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, while others were not. Each of the programmes studied is unique, and the methods used for tracing, gathering data and analysing are many and varied. As a whole, the studies will contribute to our understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

About the series

Following Footsteps is a sub-series of *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections*. The series as a whole addresses issues of importance to practitioners, policy makers and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in developing and industrial societies. Contributions to this series are welcomed. They can be drawn from theory or practice, and can be a maximum of 30,000 words. Information about contributing to the series can be obtained from the Programme Documentation and Communication at the address given on the back cover. Copyright is held by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Unless otherwise stated, however, papers may be quoted and photocopied for non-commercial purposes without prior permission. Citations should be given in full, giving the Foundation as source.

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Foreword

Two villages in the Central American country of Honduras. Both are among the poorest in this poor country. They are both situated fairly close to the capital city; they have similar access to services such as primary schools and medical centres. The populations of these villages scratch a living from agricultural work and small-scale commerce. The families tend to be large. Few adults have attended secondary school; many did not complete their primary education.

There is one important difference between the villages – one of them has had an Early Stimulation Programme since 1995. At the time of the Tracer Study, the other village had no such programme.

This Tracer Study compares small samples of children and their families from the two villages and illustrates the positive changes that a comprehensive programme can make. The Early Stimulation Programme is part of an overall programme implemented by the Christian Children's Fund (CCF), Honduras. The aim is to improve the lives of people in the communities where it operates, and activities include education, literacy, sanitation, access to safe water, medical care, nutrition, vocational training and empowerment.

The Early Stimulation Programme is a combination of home-based and centre-based activities, which works with children from birth to six years of age and their families. It is a holistic approach that targets all aspects of a young child's development. In the home-based component, local women have been trained to work with mothers and other family members to stimulate the babies and toddlers, carry out the exercises and learn the basics of healthy child development.

The researchers identified a remarkable number of areas where differences could be found between those who had been part of the Programme (the CCF group) and those in the other village who had not (the comparison group). These include effects on the children, on the mothers and on the communities in terms of attitudes, beliefs and actions.

Differences between the two groups of parents are particularly noticeable in their perceptions of what constitutes family well-being. For the parents in the CCF group, love, respect, health and education came top of their list, followed by housing, food and security. The elements mentioned by parents in the comparison group were

somewhat different: housing, health, work, food and money. Thus we see a clear distinction between socio-affective values in the CCF group and basic needs in the comparison group – a distinction that can be traced to the effects of the CCF Programme.

The parents' attitudes about discipline and relationships were also different. Comparison group parents perceived punishment as an aspect of well-being – a method to help children understand – and the family structure was vertical and authoritarian. Families in the CCF group were more horizontal and participative for all members; the children were respected and listened to and there was much less need for punishment.

Primary school teachers saw the differences in children very clearly – children from the CCF group were better able to adapt to school, had good habits and behaviour. They were more responsible, sociable and communicative than their counterparts from the same village who had not been in the Programme. The Programme had encouraged the children to think as well as to develop and strengthen their skills and abilities, and this enabled them to make good progress socially as well as in academic subjects.

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Although the Programme did not emphasise gender roles, it was obvious to the researchers that the children in the CCF group were far better able to mix with the opposite sex than the children in the comparison group. During group activities, the comparison group children showed a clear separation between the sexes, and the roles they took in their homes were clearly gender related. This is in contrast to the CCF children who did whatever was needed in the home – whether it was ironing or looking after the animals – and who did not separate by gender during group activities.

Based on responses from interviewees and the observations of the researchers, it was apparent that the Programme had generated changes in the wider community in that there was a 'spirit of collaboration' and mutual respect. Families in the CCF group visited and were visited by friends and neighbours, while families in the comparison group said that they 'had no friends'.

Health conditions among the CCF children and families were superior to those of the comparison group. This included participation in a 'healthy child' programme from infancy, incidence of illness, treatment of water, use of latrines, and general cleanliness and hygiene around the home and in personal habits.

But perhaps most important, the study found that the Early Stimulation Programme had enabled the children to internalise values and a sense of self and to have hopes and dreams for the future. As one of them said:

Everything is in the mind; if you use it, you'll be alright.

These results show how a comprehensive programme can have far-reaching effects that go beyond the individual participants. We can see that where there are multiple needs, a programme that addresses as many of these as possible is essential.

We have no way of knowing how effective the Early Stimulation Programme would have been if it had been implemented in isolation. However, we can see that by using a combination of home-based and centre-based activities, the Early Stimulation Programme involves all members of the family, leading to development across a wide spectrum and synergy between the different elements.

And there is hope for the families living in the comparison group village as the Programme has now started there as well. The village was chosen for the tracer study for this very reason and CCF Honduras was thus able to achieve two useful aims: to have a comparison group for the study reported here and to compile a baseline that can be used for research in the future.

The tracer studies

The early childhood interventions supported by the Foundation are action projects that are implemented by locally based partners in 'the field'. Their objectives are concerned with developing and improving the lives of children and their families and communities in the here and now, based on the hypothesis that this will lay the foundation for improved opportunities in the future. These projects have not been conceived or implemented as research studies in which children/families have been randomly assigned to 'treatment' or 'control' groups, and they have not usually been subjected to tests or other research instruments.

Evidence exists on the longer-term effects of early childhood interventions, much of it coming from longitudinal studies that have been implemented as research projects in industrialised countries. The outcomes are mixed, although usually fairly positive. Other evidence, mostly anecdotal, is available from early childhood projects such as those supported by the Foundation, and again, this is mostly positive.

After more than 30 years of support for field projects, the Foundation decided in 1998 to commission a number of studies that would trace former participants of projects to find out how they were faring some years after they had left the programme. Although evaluation has been a major element in early childhood programmes supported by the

Foundation, we had never, until then, gone back to find out how people were doing a number of years later.

Other similar studies have taken place in countries as widely spread as Botswana, Colombia, Jamaica and Kenya, India, Ireland, Israel, Trinidad and the USA. Each of the programmes studied is different in its target group, in its context and in its strategies. This means that the methods used to trace former participants and discover their current status are almost as varied as the original programmes. In the studies that we commissioned, we emphasised an anthropological and qualitative approach that uses small samples of former participants, matching them for the purpose of comparison, where possible, with individuals/families that shared similar characteristics.

Of all the studies in the programme, the one reported here is unique in that the Bernard van Leer Foundation never funded it. The Christian Children's Fund in Honduras was one of the participants in the Foundation-led Effectiveness Initiative and decided to undertake a tracer study as part of its investigations. We were delighted to be able to include this long-term programme in our set of tracer studies, and this present publication is the result.

It was our intention from the beginning to share the results of the individual studies with as wide an audience as possible. We have also published guidelines for implementing tracer studies, based on experiences in the field.

We anticipate that each study report will be a source of learning and reflection in its own context and country as well as for a wider public. As a whole, we hope that these exercises in following footsteps will contribute to a better understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

Ruth N Cohen

Bernard van Leer Foundation

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NOTE

To protect the privacy of the families involved in this study the names of people and places have been changed.

Executive summary

This study was undertaken to evaluate the impact on the quality of life of children and their families who participated in the Early Stimulation Programme that began in 1995. The Programme was initiated and is implemented by the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) of Honduras and the study was undertaken in the Francisco Morazán Department.

The Programme is aimed at children from birth to six years old. Women from the community who are trained to be 'Mother Guides' (*Madres Guias*) visit families in their homes from the birth of a child. At four years of age, the children enter a CCF preschool where they remain until they enter formal school at the age of seven.

This qualitative research project took place in 2002. It studied a group of 10 former participants (the CCF group) when they were nine or 10 years old and a matched group (the comparison group) from another village where no such early childhood programme existed. Respondents included the children, their parents, Programme staff and volunteers, teachers and other members of the communities.

Research tools were adapted and designed for each group of respondents with the emphasis on participatory techniques. Findings are reported analytically as well as in the words of the children and adults wherever relevant.

The results showed that there were significant differences between the two groups with regard to living conditions and the well-being of children and their families. These included differences in health and education, but basically the contrast was in the internalisation of the children's values and their outlook on the future.

From the evidence, there is no doubt that the Early Stimulation Programme had a positive impact on the children who were its main target, their families and the community in general. Children who had been in the Programme were more advanced in their general development than the comparison group, which enabled them to cope with their school work more effectively and efficiently. Their values, self-esteem and assurance levels were also seen to be reinforced. Their access to health care and general levels of health and nutrition were superior to those of the comparison group. Above all, there was a clear strengthening of their affective bonds to family members and other people within their community.

Chapter one



Setting the scene

The Christian Children's Fund (CCF) of Honduras is a non-profit private association that has been providing support since 1982 for activities related to or involving improvement of the well-being of boys and girls growing up in disadvantaged communities.

These activities have the support of the Christian Children's Fund International (CCF International), an organisation made up of an alliance of individual organisations operating in over 50 countries. Although each member organisation maintains its national identity and autonomy, CCF International determines programme standards and the criteria for seeking programme funding.

The programme carried out by CCF Honduras (CCFH) is structured along three lines: education, health and nutrition. Using the holistic focus of early child development, the activities in the programmes are addressed directly to children and their families. All activities are planned and evaluated on the basis of indicators and processes of child development. The activities can be summarised under nine headings:

1. Early stimulation

Home visits to families, children from birth to four years of age

Non-formal preschool centres, children from four to six years

2. Improvement in the quality of education

Direct support for schoolchildren to strengthen their reading, writing and mathematics

Material needs are also attended to during this period

3. Literacy

Boys and girls over 15 with no previous formal schooling

4. Nutrition

Preschool children under five years of age

5. Access to safe water

Benefiting affiliated families and the entire community through the construction and/or rehabilitation of water channels

6. Construction of toilets

Improvements to the sanitary conditions of the family and community, contributing to the conservation of the environment

7. Medical care

Attending to the medical needs of children and their families

8. Vocational training for young people

Support for and development of initiatives addressed to finding productive activities that correspond to youngsters' natural talents

9. Empowerment

An ongoing empowerment process to enhance the skills of fathers and mothers in order to develop their leadership capabilities in the community and in the administration and management of the projects being implemented

The Early Stimulation Programme

The main aim of the Programme is to carry out appropriate early stimulation for children from birth to six years. More specifically, this involves stimulation in the fields of language, cognitive development, motor skills, hygiene and the psychosocial sphere, with the aim of contributing to improvements in development and enhancing children's access to and ability to benefit from schooling. Attention is also given to the importance of the role of fathers and mothers as instigators of early stimulation in their children.

CCF designed a methodology called 'Mother Guides' (*Madres Guías*), which consists of training mothers in the community who then become responsible for enhancing the skills of the mothers of the children in the

Programme. These skills are related to strengthening different areas of development in the children. The Mother Guides are all volunteers; they receive no remuneration for their work.

Mother Guides have basic tools, such as an illustrated manual and a well-defined plan of Programme contents based on the theories underlying the early stimulation process.

The Early Stimulation Programme uses two main strategies: non-formal preschool centres and home visits to families.

Home visits to families – children from birth to four years

A Mother Guide visits each home once a week to teach the mother to use the exercises that stimulate development of a child's skills. Regular evaluations are carried out to ascertain achievements made and any possible limitations.

While respecting the affective dependence of the child towards its mother, the mother is asked to carry out actions under the direction of the Mother Guide and the Educator. The time dedicated to attending to the child is organised at the discretion of the Mother Guide and is dependent on her schedule as well as that of the child's parents.

Non-formal preschool centres – children aged four to six

Programme children attend the CCF non-formal preschool centre where they

are attended by caregivers who have been trained by CCF. The caregivers are local women who have completed elementary school and, in some cases, have attended high school. In the preschool, attention is paid to all age-appropriate aspects of children’s development, including health,

hygiene, motor skills, cognitive skills, language and socialisation.

Table 1 lists the various activities and indicates which adults work with the children on them: mothers, Mother Guides and preschool teachers.

TABLE 1: ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAMME ACCORDING TO DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	Activities	Mothers	Mother Guides	Preschool teachers
	GROSS MOTOR SKILLS			
1	Neck-moving exercises	•	•	
2	Exercises for learning to crawl	•		
3	Helping children to walk	•		
4	Jumping on 1 and 2 feet	•		
5	Running	•		•
6	Walking forwards and backwards	•		•
	FINE MOTOR SKILLS			
7	Playing with plasticine or clay			•
8	Cutting paper			•
9	Making balls with toilet paper			•
10	Making figures			•
11	Colouring		•	•
12	Eye-moving exercises	•	•	
13	Threading a needle	•	•	
14	Buttoning up a shirt		•	
15	Holding a pencil		•	
	COGNITIVE			
16	Learning the colours		•	•
17	Differentiating between hard and soft	•	•	•
18	Differentiating between light and heavy			•
19	Familiarisation with own body			•

	Activities	Mothers	Mother Guides	Preschool teachers
20	Differentiating gender			•
21	Teaching the difference between yesterday, today and tomorrow		•	
22	Differentiating between good and bad		•	
	LANGUAGE			
23	Counting			•
24	Tongue twisters	•		•
25	Stories			•
26	Poems	•		•
27	Conversations (dialogue)	•	•	
28	Complex sentences	•	•	
29	Measuring capacity for retaining words		•	
	SOCIO-AFFECTIVE SKILLS			
30	Playing with the child	•		•
31	Introduction to playing with other children	•		•
32	Playing with and talking to neighbours			•
	HEALTH, HYGIENE AND SAFETY			
33	Checkups and vaccinations for healthy children	•	•	•
34	Brushing teeth	•	•	•
35	Bathing every day	•	•	•
36	Drinking boiled or chlorinated water	•	•	•
37	Washing fruit and hands before eating	•	•	•
38	Using clean clothes and cleaning the house	•	•	•
39	Cutting and cleaning fingernails	•	•	•
40	Cleaning shoes	•	•	•
41	Putting rubbish in the bin	•	•	•
42	Crossing the street carefully	•	•	•

Source: Field research, March/April 2002.

Location of the study

Honduras is a Central American country. It is divided into administrative ‘departments’ and townships. Since 1980, Honduras has been a democracy (a constitutional democratic republic). It has a population of approximately 6.4 million people, of whom 42 percent are under the age of 14 years.

According to the Honduras Human Development Report 2002, Honduras ranks 116th of 173 countries in worldwide human development. With respect to neighbouring Central American countries, it ranks below Costa Rica, Panama and El Salvador, and above Nicaragua and Guatemala.

The fundamental differences with respect to other Central American countries in the field of education have been caused by a lack of literacy among the population. This is evident in the fact that the average years of schooling for the entire population in Honduras is five (Secretary of Education, Honduras 2001).

The tracer study took place in two locations in the Francisco Morazán Department, which is in the central part of the country and includes the capital, Tegucigalpa.

Township of La Naranjita

The CCF study group is located in this township, situated in the southern part

of the department. At the time of the 2001 census, the population was approximately 5,000 and there was an average of six people per household.

The population is primarily involved in agriculture, including breeding livestock on a small scale to supply meat and dairy products for domestic consumption. Their produce is mainly marketed in the capital and in surrounding towns.

There are 10 non-formal preschool centres in the township, three of which are sponsored by World Vision (an international organisation that supports children’s projects in Honduras) with the other seven sponsored by CCF. All 10 centres are recognised by the National Secretary of Education.

There is also a health centre with a doctor and a nurse who provide medical and consultancy services on demand.

El Escondido, a village in the township of Altamira

The comparison group is located in El Escondido, one of the five villages in the township of Altamira. At the time of the 2001 census, the population was approximately 2,700 and there was an average of 12 people per household.

Data provided by the Ministry of Health show that 33 percent of households are disadvantaged, 97 percent have access to potable water but only 50 percent have

access to sewage removal systems. At the time of the study in 2002, there was (and possibly still is) temporary migration from the country to the city, consisting mostly of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years of age.

The main source of income is from marketing agricultural produce and, to a lesser extent, livestock.

The community has a primary school, a preschool centre, a health centre, interurban transport, one Catholic and one Evangelical church, a football field, latrines, a shop, and an electric power system in the process of development.

One of the reasons for choosing El Escondido as a location for this study

was that CCF was planning on implementing the Early Stimulation Programme in the village. The study findings can thus provide a baseline for future longitudinal research.

The tracer study

It was important to evaluate the impact of the CCF Early Stimulation Programme for two reasons: first, the headquarters of CCF International wanted to ascertain and identify the changes brought about in the attitudes and mindset of mothers, children and the community at large following the efforts of the Programme; second, CCFH was participating in an international programme called the Effectiveness Initiative run by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. An



The Early Stimulation Programme as seen by the community. Photo: BvLF/Ruth Cohen

evaluation of the Early Stimulation Programme would enhance CCFH's own investigations and add to the general understanding of what effectiveness means in early childhood programmes.

The study was designed to investigate children and families who had left the Programme four years earlier. Its aim was to discover in what areas the intervention had been influential and what positive effects had been produced in the lives of children who had been through the Programme. The results of this exploration would provide CCFH with information it could use to strengthen or redefine its strategy for intervention, including extending the Programme to other communities.

The study was undertaken from February to July 2002 by an external team of researchers, made up of professionals in the fields of social work, sociology, anthropology, psychology, education and statistics. The team had prior experience in qualitative research projects, as well as a good working knowledge of the programmes and actions undertaken by the CCFH in studies conducted previously.

The CCF **group** was selected from a community where the CCF Programme had been implemented since 1995. For the **comparison group**, a nearby community was chosen, based on the fact that no public or private institution had carried out any interventions there. In the following chapter, we describe the

methodology and research tools used in the study and include some details about the sample populations. Chapter Three reports on the findings of the study and Chapter Four provides an analysis of the outcomes and conclusions.

As part of the research, the 'life histories' of the children taking part in the study were reconstructed (a selection of these can be found in Chapter Three). Similarly, typical days for the families participating in the study were compiled (a representative selection of these is provided in the Annex).

Chapter two



Methodology, the samples and research tools

The research project was designed to determine whether there were measurable changes in the children and families after four years of participation in the Programme. The intention was to follow the footsteps of the children who had participated and to study the impact that the Programme had had on them.

The study included seven areas intended to enable the investigators to detect whether there was a relationship between the holistic conception of the Programme and its impact on the living conditions of participating children and their families. These seven areas included the following:

- attitudes of the mothers in relation to the well-being of their children
- awareness of the Early Stimulation Programme
- the emotional and social development of children in the family
- the child's behaviour outside of the family
- the children's performance at school
- changes in family health and basic sanitation
- changes in children's psychosocial relationships

Respondents

The study, involving a qualitative and comparative approach, sought to

establish, identify and analyse differences and similarities between children and their families who were from different communities yet shared common characteristics with respect to their socio-economic, cultural and geographical environment. As described above, there were two groups: the CCF group and the comparison group.

CCF group

The Early Stimulation Programme of the Christian Children's Fund has been operating in the community of La Naranjita since 1995. Researchers randomly selected group members from a list of Programme participants made available by CCF educators.

Comparison group

Members of the comparison group were randomly selected from a list made available by primary school teachers in the community of El Escondido. There have been no Early Stimulation Programmes implemented in this community by any institution, private or public.

Units of analysis

A selection was made of eight subgroups to serve as units of analysis: children, mothers, Mother Guides, fathers,

educators, preschool caregivers, primary school teachers and local authorities. This selection was made after critically considering their relationships in their roles as social actors and, most of all, as direct or indirect beneficiaries of the Programme.

Information was collected on each of the participants with respect to age, marital status, literacy, schooling, place of birth, occupation and income.

Collective interviews were also conducted with focus groups, where information was collected on ways of thinking, attitudes and behaviour, habits, customs, traditions, taboos and motivations. This information was intended to provide a

better working knowledge of how each of the subgroups perceived the world and life in general, and how they understood and applied the values of responsibility, solidarity, cooperation and well-being in their daily lives.

1. Children

Table 2 shows the distribution of children in the CCF and comparison groups. The children in the CCF group were current pupils in the community primary school. Half of them came from families comprising father, mother, sisters and brothers, with an average of five family members. The family unit for the remaining children was composed of mother, brothers and sisters, with an average of four per family.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN BY GENDER, AGE AND LEVEL IN SCHOOL

		CCF Group	Comparison Group
Gender	Boys	6	5
	Girls	4	5
	Total	10	10
Age	Range	9-10	9-10
Current school grade	Second	-	1
	Third	7	3
	Fourth	3	2
	Fifth	-	4
	Total	10	10
Schooling exclusivity	School only	9	7
	Complementary tasks	1	3
	Total	10	10

TABLE 3: MOTHERS, BY AGE, MARITAL STATUS, LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION

		CCF Group	Comparison Group
Age	Range	32- 47	25-41
	Average	40	30
Marital status	Married	5	6
	Common law*	1	3
	Single	3	1
	Divorced	1	-
	Total	10	10
Level of education	Primary, complete	6	4
	Primary, incomplete	4	6
	Total	10	10
Occupation	Housewife	8	5
	Other jobs	2	5
	Total	10	10

*Common law marriage is legally recognised in Honduras.

We analysed the children's mental age in relation to chronological age and the school level they had attained and found that they were at levels normal for their age or even better than normal in comparison to children who had not participated in the Early Stimulation Programme. On the national level, children from third to sixth grade averaged between 12 and 15 years

All of the children in the comparison group were attending primary school in El Escondido. The difference observed between the school age and the chronological age in the children from both groups is due to the fact that the comparison group community had no preschool education, so the children had

the opportunity to start schooling at six years of age rather than the norm of seven years established by the Ministry of Education.

2. Mothers

The mothers of the CCF children selected for the study were aged between 32 and 47, while their counterparts in the comparison group were between 25 and 41. Table 3 shows their marital status, levels of schooling and their occupations.

3. Mother Guides

The Mother Guides (*Madres Guias*) are volunteers from the community who work with children and families in CCF projects.

There were 10 Mother Guides in the study sample, of whom seven were mothers of children in the sample. All of them had children, from two to eight per mother – a total of 46, with an average of five each. Their average length of volunteer service was 5.5 years, and they dealt with a total of 61 CCF families, averaging six families each. This average was considered appropriate in view of the fact that it was a volunteer job, with no economic compensation whatsoever. The monthly family income for these women ranged from Lps. 1,000.00 to Lps. 3,000.00 (US\$60.60 to US\$181.82 – exchange rate 2002), with an average income of Lps. 1,640.00 (US\$99.39).

4. Fathers

Although six husbands of mothers consulted in the CCF group were invited to participate, acceptance was low, with only three willing to provide information. All nine fathers in the comparison group participated. As with the mothers' group, the average age of the fathers in the comparison group was younger than that of the CCF fathers. See Table 5 for details.

5. Educators

Four educators were in the focus group. Their ages were between 20 and 43, with an average age of 30.

TABLE 4: MOTHER GUIDES IN CCF GROUP, BY AGE, MARITAL STATUS, LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION

		CCF Group
Age	Range	20 - 45
	Average	38
Marital status	Married	6
	Common law*	1
	Single	2
	Divorced	1
	Total	10
Level of education	Primary, complete	7
	Primary, incomplete	3
	Total	10
Occupation	Housewife	8
	Other jobs	2
	Total	10

*Common law marriage is legally recognised in Honduras.

TABLE 5: FATHERS, BY STUDY PARTICIPATION, AGE, LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND INCOME

		CCF Group	Comparison Group
Participation	Asked to participate*	6	9
	Actual participants	3	9
Age	Range	47 - 48	29 - 36
	Average	47.5	33
Level of education	Primary, complete	1	2
	Primary, incomplete	2	6
	Secondary	-	1
	Total	3	9
Average earnings	Equal to legal minimum wage	-	4
	Under legal minimum wage	3	5
	Total	3	9

*married and common law husbands

6. Caregivers

Two caregivers who worked in La Naranjita participated in the study. Both of them took care of children from the CCF group in the non-formal preschool centre and had previously been Mother Guides.

One was 51 years of age, married, with six children. She had completed primary school and had worked as a caregiver for 10 years in the CCF centre. The other had also been a caregiver for 10 years, during the first eight of which she worked for the CCF. She currently works in the World Vision preschool centre, where no activities related to early stimulation are undertaken. She is 52 years of age, single, and has two children. She attended secondary school but did not complete it.

7. Primary school teachers

Teachers who taught the CCF children at the primary school ranged in age from 23 to 54 years, with a predominance of ages from 30 to 38 years. There is a school principal, an assistant principal and five assistant teachers.

In the case of the comparison group, first grade teachers were interviewed to establish any limitations the children may have had attending the school for the first time and entering straight into first grade without any preschool experience. Interviews were also held with second, fourth and fifth grade teachers, who were available during the information-collection process.

8. Local authorities

In addition to the participants mentioned above, several other people were consulted in interviews and informal talks. These included people from the municipal authorities and employees of institutions active in the communities. The aim was to obtain additional information and corroborate the information collected.

Research techniques and tools

Several different participative research techniques and tools were used during the field work for this study.

Focus groups

Semi-structured discussions were held to encourage participants to respond to open-ended questions in order to discover their knowledge level, their opinions and concerns with respect to the Early Stimulation Programme.

Structured observation

Structured observation was undertaken systematically by field researchers with the help of a pre-established guide that listed the items to be observed, which included events and changes in the different surroundings in which the child was growing up: the home, school, church and community in general.

Profile of mothers' daily activities

A list of the mothers' activities during a 'typical day' was made in order to establish their usual daily routine.

Historic profile of changes occurring in the child

This profile included information from observations and interviews, noting the significant changes that had occurred in the lives of the children over time.

Researchers drew up their 'life histories' while conducting structured interviews with the children's mothers and other family members.

Structured interviews

Using a guidance questionnaire, schoolteachers were interviewed about topics related to the achievements, performance and socialisation of the children in their school surroundings.

Caregivers were interviewed using a guidance questionnaire to elicit their opinions about the children's ability to respond to the challenges and difficulties of preschool activities.

CCF educators were interviewed to gather their opinions on programme activities, the work done by the CCF mothers and Mother Guides, the results achieved by the children, and their relationships with caregivers and local schoolteachers.

The fathers were interviewed to gather information on their opinions regarding the well-being of their children. Specifically, fathers of the CCF group were asked about the early stimulation activities that their household members performed with the children, as well as

their opinion as to the benefits of the Programme for themselves, their family and their community in general.

Projective drawing

This is a technique that was especially useful with the children’s focus groups. It encourages participants to express themselves in graphic form – in this case, the vision the children had of their family at that moment, of themselves and of their community.

Storytelling

Storytelling consisted of having the children listen to a story about a bird who was all alone and unprotected and then gets taken care of by a family, with

the specific request that they identify with the bird and share in its feelings.

The letter

The children each wrote a letter to their parents and made commitments to them as to how they wanted their future life to be and what they would need from their parents in order to achieve this.

Exchange of experiences

Meetings were held with Mother Guides, mothers and children in both the Programme and comparison groups to stimulate conversations between the two groups to share experiences and to clear up any doubts about the project.

TABLE 6: RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

	Children	Mothers	Mother Guides	Fathers	Educators	Preschool caregivers	School teachers	Local authorities
Focus groups	•	•	•	•				
Structured observation	•				•	•	•	
Typical day		•	•	•				
Life history		•	•	•				
Structured interview		•	•	•	•	•	•	• (semi-structured)
Projective drawing	•							
Storytelling	•							
The letter	•							
Exchange of experiences		•	•	•				
Visits to children’s homes		•	•	•				
Individual interviews		•	•	•				

There were two **work teams**: the management and consulting team and the information and registration team.

The **management and consulting team** were specialists in qualitative research, socio-anthropology, educational psychology and economics. Their functions were as follows:

- designing the research project
- developing and testing the tools for collecting and registering information
- empowering field researchers to use the techniques and tools
- conducting the initial reconnaissance of the work area
- selecting samples
- monitoring and supervising field research activities
- ordering, classifying and analysing the information obtained

The **information collection and registration team** was made up of professional researchers in the field of social work who were hired full time. Their functions included the following:

- collecting and registering information – in each community, one of the researchers conducted group interviews while the other took notes on the observations of each particular case
- collecting secondary or documentary information to provide additional data for the development and testing of tools, including a literature review about CCF Honduras and the Early Stimulation Programme

Research timeline: stages

1. Planning the research

The planning stage included the following:

- establishing the terms of reference of the consultancy group (together with the executive management of CCFH)
- configuring the work teams
- analysing the themes and systematising by subgroup
- developing tools for collecting information – questionnaires, guidelines and so on – and making subsequent presentations to the executive management of CCF
- selecting, with CCFH, the communities to be studied, including the following:
 - reconnaissance of the area for project implementation
 - meetings with the team of CCF educators in La Naranjita and the project assistant in El Escondido, to provide information on the aims of the study and the activities to be undertaken within the project
 - identification and random selection of the persons who would comprise the samples (both for testing and for the study itself)
- validating tools – pilot groups were established for this purpose, containing parents and children from both the CCF and the comparison groups. This helped achieve the following:
 - establishing the necessary timelines
 - detecting the degree of understanding of the questions included in the

- interviews and any possible difficulties
- determining the duration of group interviews in the focus groups
- undertaking any necessary corrections as early in the process as possible
- empowering the staff in charge of the fieldwork in motivational and participatory techniques, as well as in the appropriate management of the questionnaires and guidelines (manuals) for interviews with the focus groups

2. Field work

A team of researchers travelled to the work area for two and a half months in order to carry out the following activities:

- conducting information meetings with local authorities (the mayor and parents' committees) to provide data

- on the planned activities
- holding information meetings with the two test groups (written invitations to participate were handed out ahead of time)
- visiting homes to fill out family files, including observations within the family that might be relevant to the study (relations among family members, hygiene, responsibility, socialisation of the children)
- visiting institutions active in the study area (health centres, elementary schools, high schools, preschools) to obtain general information with respect to the availability of service

3. Information collection

Information was collected according to the techniques and tools defined in the research project (see Table 6) for each of the subgroups.

Meetings held with both groups of mothers

The aim was to define operational criteria and norms for each of the groups. The CCF group decided to call itself the *guilas* (Eagles), and the comparison group, *Unión y Esfuerzo* (Union and Effort).

The meetings concluded with the activity *Fears and Expectations*, to help participants reflect on their ideas and feelings with respect to participating in the study. In general, their opinions were as follows:

Fears:

Not being able to respond to questions
Speaking in public
Indiscreet comments from their partners
Remorse

Expectations:

Learning new things
Overcoming fears
Achieving togetherness in the group
Being successful in the family

Mothers

Twenty mothers participated in the **focus groups**, where the following techniques were used: animation, concentration, analysis, reflection, group work, projective drawings and individual questionnaires, as well as backup material (flipcharts, individual sheets) to facilitate comprehension of the themes presented.

As part of the focus group work, information was obtained from the mothers that could be used to develop the ‘life histories’ of the children.

With families from different social levels (very poor, poor and comfortably well-off¹), typical days were drawn up in each of the areas selected for research.

Children

In addition to the techniques used with the mothers, it was necessary to improvise

a series of additional techniques to attract and keep the children’s attention, thus ensuring their attendance and punctuality.

During visits made to the homes of participants and at school, structured observation guidelines were completed by the researchers, with the aim of observing and registering significant events and changes in the various surroundings in which the children were growing up.

Fathers

Although this was not in the original plan, one day was given over to talking with the fathers of the various families in each group. This focus group helped us gain a better understanding of the fathers’ situation and compare their perceptions of the well-being of the children and their relationships with them with those of the mothers.



Proyecto Lempo: capacity-building; giving family advice on nutrition. Photo: Courtesy CCFH

Participation levels were different in each group: all nine fathers in the comparison group came to the talks, whereas only three of the six invited CCF fathers actually attended (the fathers apparently felt that they had delegated this function to their spouses).

Schoolteachers, caregivers, educators

A short interview was held with the teachers of comparison group children to gain an understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the Programme and the benefits it might provide for children, families and communities.

In the case of the CCF group, structured interviews were conducted with two preschool caregivers, Mother Guides (five who initiated the Mother-Child Orientation Programme for children from birth to four years of age and five current Mother Guides) and educators in the CCF Programme.

Involving all the people related to the development of the children permitted the researchers to assess the impact of the Early Stimulation Programme, including its limitations and weaknesses, to help improve the Programme in future applications.

4. Data classification and processing

After the information had been collected from the focus groups, the data were processed, and complementary information was reviewed.

The information obtained from the subgroups was entered into a matrix in relation to the seven areas being examined: attitudes of the mothers in relation to the well-being of their children, awareness of the Early Stimulation Programme, the emotional and social development of children in the family, the child's behaviour outside of the family, the children's performance at school, changes in family health and basic sanitation and changes in the children's psychosocial relationships. This facilitated making some initial observations.

5. Systematising the report

Finally, we looked at our conclusions for each group and investigated significant findings in cases where there were differences with respect to the aims of the study.

In the following chapters, the respondents' own words have been translated from Spanish and are presented in italics to differentiate them from the findings and deductions of the researchers.

The final report on the study was discussed with staff from the Christian Children's Fund Honduras, whose observations have enriched the findings and recommendations given here.

¹ Although the well-off family was not part of the programme, this information was included for comparison.

Chapter three



Analysis of the impact of the Early Stimulation Programme

In this chapter, we report the perceptions of the groups we consulted in relation to the impact of the Early Stimulation Programme on the living standards of the CCF children and their families.

Again, the data were classified according to the seven areas of interest (see panel below). The information was analysed qualitatively in order to compare the similarities and differences between the CCF group and the comparison group.

The CCF Early Stimulation Programme is aimed at the problems affecting children from the time of conception up to six years of age, with the aim of improving their well-being. Thus, one of the main objectives of the research study was to examine in depth how the well-being of children was perceived by the groups consulted, and what they considered they had achieved up to that

date, making a comparison between the past and the present.

Attitudes of the mothers in relation to the well-being of their children

Well-being of children

The study results show that people had a clear idea of what their children needed.

In the CCF group, mothers, fathers, caregivers and schoolteachers all defined well-being as the following:

Having everything necessary for survival: ensuring that children were lacking nothing, that they had a suitable home to live in, enough food, a school for learning, a health centre for health care during illness, clothes, that they received love and affection from parents and other family members, were respected and had entertainment and fun. That there was a project to protect them.

The lines of research

- Attitudes of the mothers in relation to the well-being of their children
- Awareness of the Early Stimulation Programme
- Emotional and social development of the children in the family
- The behaviour of the child outside of the family
- Performance of the children at school
- Changes in family health and basic sanitation
- Changes in children's psychosocial relationships

On the other hand, the children thought well-being was

Playing with brothers, sisters and friends, having pets at home and playing with them, doing homework and understanding it, living in a clean house where nothing is lacking (food, shoes and clothes). We are happy when we are not sick and have our whole family around us.

In the **comparison group**, mothers and fathers stated that well-being for them was *The future, achieving what we propose. The CCF Programme will come and provide support in the community, with medicine, education, improvements to homes, recreation, latrines. Because it is good: anything done for children in a community benefits the entire population.*

As for the children in the comparison group, their view of well-being was *A way of living comfortably and with time for rest; when our parents love each other because the whole family feels happy,*

especially when there's enough food and we can go to school with our stomachs full. When they punish and scold because we do not listen to them, it is well-being.

Regarding the statement from the children in the comparison group about well-being, their mothers and fathers also agreed that punishment is important to the well-being of their children: *Well-being is also punishing a child, scolding them so they will understand.*

It can be inferred that both groups have a clear idea about what well-being is. However, the statements of the CCF group come closer to the idea transmitted by the Early Stimulation Programme in that the comparison group considers punishment as contributing to well-being.

Elements contributing to the well-being of the family

It is clear that there are differences in what people consider the most relevant

TABLE 7: ELEMENTS PERCEIVED BY BOTH GROUPS AS CONTRIBUTING TO WELL-BEING

CCF group	Comparison group
1. Love	1. Housing
2. Respect	2. Health
3. Health	3. Work
4. Education	4. Food
5. Housing	5. Money
6. Food	
7. Security	

Source: Field research, March/April, 2002.

aspects of well-being, as well as in the order of importance given by the two groups (Table 7).

In the CCF group, there was a preference for values in the socio-affective realm. Certain needs were no longer priorities for them because they had been taken care of to a certain extent by the Programme itself, which was not the case in the comparison group, where basic needs were still seen as a priority.

What the mothers' concept of well-being had been as children

In this respect, both the CCF group and the comparison group parents agreed that their children enjoyed greater well-being than they had had when they were young: *Before, homes were more disorganised. There was more punishment and more poverty. As an example of this, we were poorly clothed, bare-footed and sometimes we only had one meal a day.*

They also had health problems, because *people died and we did not know what of.* In addition to this, many fathers were alcoholics and humiliated and mistreated their wives.

There were very few educational centres and they had to walk long distances to get to them:

We had no means of transport. There were no roads, no lighting, no running water. The water we drank, cooked food in or used for cleaning had to be brought from

the river or the ravine in earthenware jugs we carried on our heads. The boys went with their fathers to work in the fields and at harvest time they missed their classes because they had to watch over the crops so that the animals wouldn't eat the corn. This is why we didn't go to school. Our parents said it was better to work to eat – the school wouldn't give us our food.

On the other hand, both fathers and mothers stated that *Before we had many things that we have lost today, such as our own homes. Our parents gave us loving care and they respected us, but they also demanded respect from us, and that's why there was lots of security, moral values. We respected our teachers, our parents and neighbours. Our parents knew how to deal with us, and if we made a mistake, we were severely punished. Food was more readily available to us because the soil was better, there were more fruit trees and we had better harvests.*

Opportunities to achieve greater well-being

This area was investigated among children in both groups using projective drawings. The aim was to discover what opportunities they currently had to achieve greater well-being.

Based on the way they expressed themselves in their drawings, the children in the CCF group seemed to have many more opportunities to achieve greater

well-being. They had their families and they all lived under one roof with basic necessities (lighting, water, latrines).

In addition, they had a school and teachers and schoolmates who loved them and cared about them. They lived in a nice community with lots of trees, wide streets, good transport for travelling to other communities or cities and marketing their produce.

The drawings done by the children in the **comparison group** also indicated that they identified the affection they received from their families as an example of well-being, along with a school where they could feel comfortable with their schoolmates. In contrast, they did not clearly identify with their community, apparently because of distant relations among neighbours.

Awareness of the Early Stimulation Programme

The Early Stimulation Programme has been in place since 1995 and its basic aim is the development of all the potential capacities of the child.

To achieve this aim, the Programme's main strategy is for the children's parents to participate with the assistance of trained community personnel such as Mother Guides and preschool caregivers. The parents are responsible for carrying out the Programme activities with

children from birth to the age of six in the areas of gross and fine motor skills, cognitive skills, language, socio-affective skills, health, hygiene and personal safety.

Knowledge of the child's early development in each area

The aim in our study was to explore the degree of understanding and application of the activities in each area (see Table 1), as implemented by the mothers, Mother Guides and preschool caregivers who worked with children in the CCF group.

In the interviews conducted with mothers, they stated that with the support of the Mother Guides,
They attended to children from birth until they left the preschool centre, carrying out the activities corresponding to each stage.

The activities related to the development of gross motor skills ranged from checking their own bodies; exercises to strengthen their heads, hands, feet and eyes; turning around (with help), and keeping their balance until they could take their first steps.

When the child started attending preschool, development activities were continued in all areas, with the caregivers coordinating the effort with the mother, who would reinforce the same activities at home with the support of the Mother Guide.

A life history – Arelys (CCF group)

Arelys is nine years old, the youngest of five brothers and sisters. Her birth was attended by a midwife and she had regular healthy child checkups from birth to the age of five. During pregnancy, her mother was depressed because her husband had problems with alcohol. This resulted in aggressive behaviour and physical and emotional ill-treatment, which has continued since Arelys's birth, although more sporadically.

Arelys lives with her parents — her father (aged 49) and her mother (aged 41), who is a CCF Mother Guide — and her four siblings (aged from 14 to 21).

She sat up at six months, started to crawl at nine months, and walked at 12. She took part in the Early Stimulation Programme from birth. Arelys's major difficulty was in the fine motor skills, as she did not stretch her hands. But this was not the case in the gross motor skills, as she was very agile from a very early age.

She attended the CCF preschool centre from the age of five, and the nursery teacher who was in charge of her for two years recalled: *She was well behaved, always came to school clean and liked playing singing games standing in a ring, listening to stories and dancing.*

At seven she started primary school in La Naranjita and is now in third grade. Her teacher said: *She has been well behaved, is responsible about her homework, pays attention in class and has an academic level of 95 percent.*

In the afternoons, Arelys teaches her older sister, who is only in her first year, to read, add, subtract and multiply. Together they listen to The Teacher at Home, an educational radio programme. When she is older, Arelys says she will work to help pay for her sister's studies.

The father works sporadically as a labourer which provides some financial support for the family. Occasionally one of Arelys's brothers contributes some money, and her mother makes and sells small pastries to supplement the family income.

Arelys states that when she grows up she wants to study law. Her mother intends to help her to achieve her dream.

Researcher's remarks:

Arelys is kind, respectful, happy, responsible and helpful. She is not very affectionate to her father (who is sometimes bad-tempered) and is protective with her mother (the emotional ill-treatment of the mother by the father continues). Her father is an alcoholic and not very responsible about his family obligations. Arelys is occasionally aggressive with males. She integrates easily into the mixed groups but gets annoyed when the boys play tricks on her.

At home she helps with the housework. When she comes home from school, she has lunch, washes her uniform, does her homework and goes out to play with her best friend. Her favourite game is playing with dolls.

At school she is seen by her teachers as paying attention in class, responsible about her homework and making an effort to do it well, participating when the teacher asks questions. She likes going up to the blackboard to do sums and shares her school materials with her companions. She likes writing letters to her sponsors; she says she loves them very much even though she does not know them.

A life history – Josefina (comparison group)

Josefina, who is nine years old, was born in the Tegucigalpa Children s Maternity Hospital. She is the eldest of four brothers and sisters and has not followed the healthy child programme.

During pregnancy, her mother showed signs of emotional disorders, crying constantly because she was living with her parents-in-law and missed her own parents. During the birth it was found that she had a narrow pelvis, which made delivery difficult and resulted in prenatal stress for the baby.

Up to the age of five, Josefina suffered from malnutrition and severe respiratory infections, receiving treatment at the community health centre. Despite these problems her development was normal. Her mother states that she started to walk at 15 months.

Josefina lives with her father (aged 29, a construction labourer) and her mother (aged 36, a housewife and a member of a packaging micro-company). They are married and both completed primary school.

At the age of four Josefina started kindergarten at the children s feeding centre. At seven she entered the local primary school and is now in third grade. Her mother says that since she started school, her performance has been promising, although she has difficulty with the basic subjects, especially with Spanish and reading.

During the first two years at school she received aid from the Family Allowance Program (PRAF), with a school bag and a voucher for 50 Lempiras (\$3.00) per month.

Josefina wants to carry on studying. Her mother, in view of the family s financial situation, says she will do whatever she can to give her daughter an education for as long as she can. However, she adds that this will depend largely on future possibilities, or receiving aid from institutions like the CCF.

Researcher's remarks:

Josefina was observed in different environments of her daily life. She is always clean and tidy, with her hair combed. At school she is shy, fails to participate and does not play with her classmates at playtime. At home she helps with the housework and has a good relationship with her younger brothers and sisters, whom she looks after when her mother is out.

She has a best and only friend with whom she does her homework. Josefina is strongly influenced by her cousin who lives next door and is constantly shouting at and scolding her. The cousin does not allow Josefina to decide for herself, telling her what to do and how to do it.

During the work meetings, it was observed that she does not like joining in with the mixed groups or doing teamwork.

As in the former stage, children were stimulated in the development of fine motor skills, exercising their fingers and their eye muscles. Above all, any possible problems among the children were explored, such as lack of physical or mental coordination, stammering or hyperactivity. If there was a problem, a remedy was sought.

In the cognitive area, children were taught to recognise and differentiate the members of other families. When they were older, they were taught to recognise danger and to use words such as 'mama', 'papa' and so on. These knowledge areas were graduated according to age, up to the level of memorising riddles, short poems and tongue twisters when they could already talk.

With respect to the socio-affective area, on the one hand they were shown that they were loved and appreciated, and on the

other, they were encouraged to be participative and sociable with family, friends and neighbours, being taught good habits, and moral and cultural values.

In relation to health, hygiene and safety habits, first they were taught and then encouraged to practise personal hygiene alone (bathing, washing hands, brushing teeth) and then helping with household tasks (sweeping, making the bed, tidying their clothes).

Before going to school, they were taught to watch out for dangers in the street, the school and the community; to drink boiled or treated water and not to eat things from the street, as well as not to litter. They also had toilet training and learned to dress themselves.

Based on the data obtained from the investigation, mothers affirmed that they taught and practised these skills, habits

and values. The same responses were forthcoming from Mother Guides and caregivers. Even the children stated they had learned these things both at home and in their preschool centres.

Achievements of the Early Stimulation Programme

The importance of the Programme lies in its results. The changes observed in the attitudes of the children and their community are the measures of the Programme's success.

These changes are both external and internal, with the former being more

closely linked to tangible factors and therefore easier to observe and quantify. The internal changes are intangible and not as easy to measure. Internal changes are also more difficult to achieve because they are related to changes in ways of thinking, feeling and acting. They are aimed at improving human beings per se, whereas the external changes are related to tangible living conditions such as health, education, home life and housing.

Table 8 shows the differences observed by primary schoolteachers among children who had access to early stimulation and those who did not.

TABLE 8: CHARACTERISTICS OBSERVED BY SCHOOLTEACHERS AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN LA NARANJITA

No access to Early Stimulation Programme	Access to Early Stimulation Programme
• Less able to adapt to school level	• More able to adapt to school level
• Cannot button shirt	• More knowledge
• Cannot tie shoes	• Good habits
• Cannot hold pencil	• Good behaviour
• Difficulties in all areas	• Good values
• Comes to school untidy	• Learns faster
• Uses bad words	• More responsible with school work
• Socialises with difficulty	• More punctual
• Has learning problems	• Tidy and neat
• Learns slowly	• More responsible
• Does not bathe	• Sociable
• Speaks with difficulty	• Communicative
• Squabbles with schoolmates	• More collaborative
• Shy	• More participative

Source: Field research, March/April, 2002.

TABLE 9: BENEFITS OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AS SEEN BY THE VARIOUS SUBGROUPS

Child	Mother	Teacher	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned to read before going to school • Mutual respect, solidarity and self-esteem • Basic skills well developed • Physical and mental skills well developed • Anxious to learn and improve • Better communication • Greater knowledge of self and others • More responsible with school and family duties • Better socialisation • Better teamwork • Loss of shyness • Better able to use learning tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communication with sons and/or daughters • Better basic skills in daily tasks • Better and wider knowledge of environment • Better knowledge of children and their importance • More and better services for family health • Enjoyment of better individual and family health • Better employment • Better level of understanding between parents and children; no punishments • Better habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery of new possibilities • Better knowledge of children and their importance • Children more participative • Responsible children, easier to work with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of communal organisation • Commitment to community affairs • Better communication • More possibilities for participation from women and children • People better able to speak in public • Availability of better services for the benefit of society • Improvements in general health

Source: Field research, March/April, 2002.

Table 9 shows the Programme results, based on the study interviews.

Although it is not included in Table 9, there is another effect that should be stressed. One preschool caregiver, who no longer works for the CCF, said that the knowledge she acquired during her time with CCF as a caregiver and as a Mother Guide was highly useful in her current job. She now uses early stimulation with

children in her care and also teaches her neighbours how to use early stimulation exercises with their children.

Advantages of the Early Stimulation Programme

Based the data collected from the children, parents, educators, preschool caregivers and schoolteachers, the Programme had many advantages for all

concerned:

- It facilitated the development and improvement of living conditions.
- It provided food, medicine and school materials to children, in addition to providing knowledge and experience.
- It enabled the community to develop a series of projects related to basic services and production.

Emotional and social development of the children in the family

Children's relations with other family members

One of the most important considerations for a child's future is his or her relationship with other members of the family.

A life history – Tamara (CCF group)

Tamara is nine years old, the third of five brothers and sisters. She was born in La Naranjita and took part in the healthy child programme up to the age of five, receiving all the necessary vaccinations. At three months she fell ill with bronchial problems but was treated at the health centre and made a successful recovery. She was breastfed until she was two. The mother's pregnancy was normal. The birth was attended by a community midwife.

Tamara lives with her mother (aged 32, primary education not completed) and her four brothers and sisters (aged from four to 16). Her father (aged 37) is in the army. He lives outside La Naranjita and visits the family occasionally. He sends part of his salary every month to cover the needs of the household and the mother makes petates (bed rolls) to earn extra money.

Tamara sat up at five months, crawled at seven months, and walked at 10. Her mother carried out the early stimulation exercises from Tamara's birth, although she only joined the CCF Programme when Tamara was three on her doctor's recommendation.

Tamara's caregiver at preschool recalled that she *attended every day, arrived early, liked playing with the children and took part in all our different activities. She stood out at singing and poetry and always liked the puppets.*

At six Tamara started at the primary school in La Naranjita, achieving a promising academic level. In the second year she had a teacher who punished her physically and she left the school temporarily for this reason. At present she is in third grade and, according to her teacher, she has an academic level of 90 percent.

Tamara wants to study horticulture; her parents intend to support her.

Researcher's remarks:

Tamara is a happy, quiet-natured child who respects her parents and gets on well with

the other children. She likes dancing, singing, playing with puppets, climbing trees and picking fruit and is helpful.

She has a good relationship with her brothers and sisters and helps her mother to make potatoes in the afternoons. She likes going to school, where she always pays attention. She is participative, responsible with her schoolwork, has lots of friends in class and shares materials with her classmates, but she does not like the boys to make fun of her and gets angry when they do.

A life history – Camilo (comparison group)

Camilo is 10 years old and was born in El Para so. He was taken to his maternal grandparents home in El Escondido where he currently lives. He is the first of two children and did not take part in the healthy child programme.

During pregnancy, the mother was depressed because her partner was an alcoholic. This was the cause of constant arguments and they finally separated. Camilo lives with his grandparents (aged 88 and 79), his mother (aged 32) and his brother (aged three).

Camilo's mother used early stimulation exercises with him, and his development has been normal. She learned about early stimulation through the World Vision Honduras Correspondence Secretariat and currently works with the CCF.

Camilo entered the local primary school at six and is now in the fifth year. His mother states that his performance has been promising and mathematics and physical education are his strong points. His academic level currently stands at 95 percent.

The mother manages the household expenses and earns money selling little cakes and tamales at the school when the classes finish. Camilo helps her.

Camilo wants to carry on studying, his mother intends to support him so that he can finish primary school and start secondary school.

Researcher's remarks:

Camilo was observed in his daily life. He is a kind, sociable boy who respects his elders and cooperates with others. He is happy and friendly and likes playing football.

He has a good relationship with the members of his family and helps his mother with the housework.

He is clean and tidy when he goes to school, wearing his full uniform. In class he pays attention, participates and is responsible in doing his homework. He integrates easily into groups and becomes the group leader. He helps the teacher by explaining things to his companions who have difficulties.

Children in the CCF **group** appeared to have good relationships with other family members. In the words of their parents, *We are more tolerant with our children, more understanding, caring, loving and we help them with their schoolwork. We only occasionally scold them or reprimand them when they do something they shouldn't.*

Perhaps this is the reason the children themselves said that their father, mother and older siblings were among the people they loved the most. Despite the fact that they lived in close proximity to other family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins), they showed a preference for the immediate family unit.

From the data obtained, there was a predominance of love for the mother; seven of the participating children showed this preference and only three said they loved their father more (one came from a separated family and the other two had known no father, which shows their need to have a father figure in their lives).

Nine of the children in the **comparison group** stated that they loved their father the most, and only one said he loved his mother more.

This difference in love for their parents (Table 10) can be explained in the following way. In the CCF **group**, the relationship between the mother and the child was stronger because of the Programme activities, with the result that the child felt more affinity with and confidence in his or her mother.

In contrast, in the **comparison group**, the father figure was seen by children to be the person most actively involved in running the household and exercising authority within the family.

Children's vision of the future

In addition to the view provided of the children's future, it was also important to compare these future prospects with those perceived by the mothers when they were

TABLE 10: AFFECTIVE PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN IN THE SAMPLES

	CCF group	Comparison group
1.	Mother	Father
2.	Father	Mother
3.	Older brothers/sisters	Older brothers/sisters
4.	Grandparents	Younger brothers/sisters
5.	Cousins	Cousins
6.	Younger brothers/sisters	Grandparents

Source: Field research, March/April 2002.

young, in order to see if there had been any changes between generations. CCF parents stated the following: *The future that awaits them is better. Parents are more concerned about their children, making all kinds of efforts to ensure they finish their schooling successfully. The opportunities both in education and in health and community development are greater and better because we have the support of a Christian Children's Fund project and the help of other institutions.*

Comparison group parents believed the following:

Our children will have a future and a life that will be better than they have now and better than ours was because there is more development in the community, because there is a health centre, a school close to our homes, running water at home, more work and better opportunities to study, more and better transport, and more protection from institutions such as the CCF, which we hope will come here.

But on the other hand, they also said: *We are afraid of the increase of delinquency and the bad influences on our children from the capital of the country.*

The behaviour of the child outside of the family

The child's behaviour when he or she was away from the family was of great importance in the project because it was where the results of the overall efforts to

socialise the children were most noticeable. Researchers were interested in changes in the children's behaviour as perceived by other members of the community and the local authorities of La Naranjita, where the Programme was operating.

Socialisation of children

CCF parents stated:

The children interact better with their parents, brothers and sisters, teachers and schoolmates. Since they have been participating in the Programme, they are no longer spoilt and disrespectful, and they care more about other people when they see they lack something or have a problem of some kind.

The Programme facilitated the socialisation process of the children at school and in the community because, in the children's own words:

We are all important and therefore we should respect one another and love one another, and not offend anyone with bad words. We should try to make people around us feel good. That's what we're told at home and at school.

Other members of the community in La Naranjita confirmed that in addition to having facilitated the socialisation of the children, the Programme also produced changes throughout the community:

We can see a better spirit of collaboration among people. They participate without expecting payment in return. In addition, we can see that people are more receptive

to change than before. There is more desire for progress and well-being in the family and in general. People cooperate more when the teachers or community leaders ask for help. There are better parent-teacher relations, and above all there is more respect among people.

This was not the case in families in the comparison group, who stated that: they had no friends ... because they couldn't trust anyone.

Visits among families and neighbours were infrequent or sporadic.

Performance of the children in school

The effectiveness of the activities of the Early Stimulation Programme were also reflected in the children's school performance, as shown by their success or failure.

Parents' attitudes about the children's school achievements

In general, Honduran parents express negative feelings when their children's performance at school is less than expected. As the CCF caregivers said, *It is the mothers who are more in the know about the achievements of their children. Their attitude, regardless of whether the child does well or not, is always positive, stimulating them and becoming actively involved in helping them to overcome their problems. On the*

other hand, the father, who is usually more concerned with providing his children with material benefits, usually adopts a negative attitude.

In general, fathers are only slightly involved in the learning activities of their children.

Educational achievements due to the Programme

The children benefiting from the Programme stated that it had *helped us to learn better, especially in the subjects of Spanish, maths, social studies, science and physical education.*

The activities carried out in the Early Stimulation Programme appear to have facilitated the learning process in subjects that were usually considered complex or difficult to assimilate; for example, in Spanish and mathematics, where the failure rate is quite high in the majority of schools.

In addition to the statements of the children, the teachers stated: *Children benefiting from the Programme are easier to teach. Their skills and abilities in writing, drawing and manual crafts are better developed.*

In general, we can confirm that the Early Stimulation Programme facilitated the teaching and learning process because it encouraged the children from their preschool years to think and strengthen

A life history – Fernando (CCF group)

Fernando is 10 years old. He was born in La Naranjita and weighed eight pounds at birth. He is the youngest of six brothers and followed the healthy child programme from birth to the age of five. He was breastfed until he was 13 months old.

During pregnancy, his mother had checkups, but was diagnosed as depressive, and she cried and worried because, according to her doctor, she was a high-risk mother. This was her ninth pregnancy and both her life and the baby's were apparently in danger.

Fernando lives with his father (46 years old, pastor of the Evangelist Church, primary schooling complete), his mother (44 years old, housewife, primary schooling complete) and his five brothers aged from 12 to 24 years old. The father is the only person who contributes to maintaining the family.

At the suggestion of a neighbour, Fernando's mother did early stimulation exercises with Fernando, starting when he was six months old. At the age of three, he joined the CCF Programme. Later, his mother became a Mother Guide.

At four years of age, he entered the CCF preschool centre. His caregiver recalls him as an active boy, happy, participative and tidy at work, who liked playing singing games standing in a ring and learning stories and songs.

At the age of six, he started first grade and at 10, he is in fourth grade and, according to his present teacher, his performance is satisfactory (89 percent in academic performance) and stands out in certain areas such as maths, Spanish, music and drawing.

Fernando wants to study at the La Naranjita high school and then go on to the fine arts school in Tegucigalpa, as he likes drawing and sculpture very much.

Researcher's remarks:

Fernando appears to be a noble-minded, quiet, friendly, collaborative, respectful, kind and sensitive boy.

He has an excellent relationship with other members of the family, especially with his mother. All family members look after him and care about him (he is the youngest). Fernando talks to his family about what he does at school, and takes part in household chores. The things he likes most are washing up, watering the plants, washing his clothes and tidying his room.

He likes going to church, especially to Sunday school; he often reads the Bible and talks about God. He has lots of friends, both boys and girls, and shares playthings with them. If anyone tries to pick a fight with him, he tries to avoid it. He likes fishing in the ravine. He is a good swimmer and plays football.

He likes going to school, and arrives early, neat and tidy with his uniform complete. He is very attentive, participates when the teacher asks questions and answers well; if he does not understand something, he asks his teacher. He is organised and responsible in his schoolwork.

A life history – Veronica (comparison group)

Veronica, nine years old, was born in the Tegucigalpa Children's Maternity Hospital and taken to El Escondido where she now lives. She is the eldest of four children. She took part in the healthy child programme from birth until the age of two, receiving all her vaccinations.

During pregnancy, the mother was depressed, crying constantly because she felt lonely and desperate. The husband has always been responsible for two families and only visited her at weekends. Despite this, there were no major complications.

Veronica lives with her mother (aged 25, full primary education) and her two sisters (aged five and three). Her father (aged 31, primary education incomplete) lives in Tegucigalpa with his other family but visits Veronica's family frequently.

The mother says that Veronica's development was normal. She had no preschool education because there was no centre in her community.

When Veronica was six, she started primary school as an occasional pupil and is now in the second year. Her mother comments that she has performed poorly at school and has a low level of socialisation. She has had difficulty learning to read. According to her teacher, Veronica has problems with fine motor skills, being unable to hold a pencil properly. She suffers from dyslexia but participates in class and fulfils her duties. She has difficulty with maths, Spanish and writing.

Veronica's father drives a soft drinks delivery van in Tegucigalpa, contributing to the upkeep of her and her sisters. Her mother sells little cakes at the school to earn extra money and Veronica helps her with this activity after school.

Researcher's remarks:

Veronica was observed in her daily life. She is a shy, rather unsociable girl who behaves aggressively towards her companions, particularly the boys, using a coarse vocabulary. Her appearance is unhygienic; she wears her full uniform to school, but she is dirty. Her mother comments that she does not like having a bath.

She has good relationships with the members of her family and obeys her mother's instructions, though reluctantly. She is very attached to her mother, following her everywhere; she looks after her little sisters and helps with the housework.

During the work meetings, it was observed that Veronica is not friendly, neither integrating into the mixed groups nor those of her own sex.

their abilities and skills. This positive influence on the education process extended to the human qualities of the children – they were better behaved than their peers, more concerned about them when they had problems, and better able to help them find solutions.

Changes in family health and basic sanitation

One highly significant change experienced by the members of the CCF community was that hygiene was improved, both as regards water treatment and the appropriate use of latrines and improvements to homes.

People who lacked housing were able to build a house. And improvements to building techniques were made with the incorporation of brick, cement floors, fencing, a water tank and a latrine. This was possible because of the grants provided by the Programme. Also of note was the change in attitude of the CCF neighbours, who followed advice on basic community hygiene practices, particularly as regards rubbish removal.

Mothers' and children's attitudes to hygiene

As a result of the knowledge and experiences acquired during the Programme, mothers stated that they considered good hygiene to be indispensable for improving their lives, both individually and in the home. This

is why they believed that illness has diminished in comparison to former years when, due to ignorance, they gave no importance to using hygienic or preventive measures.

This was confirmed by the caregivers who stated that preschool children, based on their observations, came to school clean and tidy every day, and they made efforts to keep their uniforms clean. *They are healthy children, and don't fall ill very often.*

In comparison to the situation in the past, they stated:

Before, people fell ill frequently, and some even died of illnesses. They didn't follow hygienic methods or preventive measures. Before, it was very common for people to be lackadaisical about disease: 'People die because it is God's will.'

It should be stressed that La Naranjita used to rank among the poorest and neediest municipalities in the country due to the lack of economic, cultural and social development, as well as having a high rate of malnutrition. Until a few years ago, La Naranjita was considered to be traditional and backward.

In contrast, house-to-house visits among the **comparison group** revealed a range of unhealthy conditions plus a disease rate that could well have been lowered if appropriate hygienic measures could be maintained.

Changes in psychosocial relationships

We looked at the perceptions that the children had of the people around them, at home and at school, whether they felt loved and respected for who they are and whether they felt their ideas were valued and respected. These are factors that help children to have greater self-confidence in the future and to achieve the things they would like to do.

Children feel there are people who show an interest in them

The CCF group children stated that in the family they felt the following:
Mummy is very concerned about us, because she teaches us things about health. She explains our schoolwork when we don't understand it. She tells us how to take care of ourselves at school. She tells us to avoid fighting with our schoolmates so we don't get into trouble, and if there is a problem, that it's better to tell our teacher. Also, since we were young she told us how to cross the street, so we don't get hit by a car, and she tells us to watch out for strangers, not to touch things that don't belong to us, not to say bad words and to obey our teachers.

When asked if they felt loved and whether their ideas were respected, they stated:
Everyone loves us in the family, especially our parents because when we are sick they take care of us, they make sure we have

food and clothes, and they always know about our grades, because they go to school and talk to the teacher. Our older brothers and sisters love us too because they take care of us, even our aunts and uncles and cousins love us because they come and take care of us when they have to. At school the people who care about us are the teachers, because they teach us new things.

The caregivers stated that the children felt they were loved at home, because they talked about their parents. The children said:

The people in the family who love us most are our parents and grandparents; they are very loving and make sure we have everything we need.

When the children were asked whether the authorities cared about them, they responded:

No, because they don't help us to bring water, or build a well or latrines, or improve our homes.

The children summarised the situation by stating:

The family and the community are the ones who care for us.

With respect to decision making in the family, the children said that:

We don't decide alone; it is our parents who help us to decide what we have to do.

This response suggests that the final decision with respect to what children should do comes from the parents. At

school, however, the children were of the opinion that they had more freedom to decide things:

because our teachers make us think so that we can decide for ourselves what we should do.

The responses given by the children in the **comparison group** reveal a very different situation. In their words, *We don't love our schoolmates because they exclude us from the group and they tease us by calling us names, especially the older children.*

It is important to mention that unlike the CCF group, the comparison group showed a clear separation between the sexes. This was true to such an extent that in all activities they undertook, the boys did not integrate with the girls or vice versa. They said they liked each other but discriminated among one another depending on gender: the boys were too strong and the girls were too delicate, weak and cried easily.

In general, children in both the comparison group and the CCF group knew how to differentiate between good and bad. Children in the **CCF group**, however, applied the knowledge acquired through participation in the Programme:

We talk with our classmates when they have problems and we tell them what they are doing wrong so they can change their attitude. We tell the ones who aren't clean and tidy to try to be cleaner and tidier so they won't fall sick... and we tell the ones

who drink that alcohol is dangerous to health; it makes people violent and bad things can happen to people who drink.

Based on the statements of children in the CCF group, their parents were capable of guiding them and this was due to the contributions of the Programme. The fathers said:

We don't impose responsibilities on our children when it comes to housework or schoolwork; they already know what they should do and when they should be doing it.

Other spontaneous confirmation came from the mothers:

When they need us we provide support, but they are the ones who decide. We tell them about their rights but we also say they have obligations. The teachers take pains to teach the children to take care of themselves.

Finally, children in both groups felt they were loved, although this was stronger in the CCF group, as a greater amount of security and initiative was evident in their behaviour and activities. This is of critical importance, because in the future these children will become adults who will be able to achieve everything they want to do. Today, for children in La Naranjita there are no obstacles because they say:

Everything is in the mind; if you use it, you'll be alright.

Chapter four



Findings and conclusions

The investigation highlighted significant differences between the CCF and the comparison groups. These differences were clearly due to the influence of the CCF Programme, which was designed to strengthen the children's growth and development in addition to changing the attitudes and behaviour of the children themselves and their parents.

Through empowerment and the methods of implementing the Programme at the individual, family and community levels, it appears that the boys and girls who participated in the Programme had greater prospects for success and more definite expectations than non-Programme children.

Differences in the concept of well-being

In the CCF group, there was a clear tendency to consider well-being as a determining factor (mainly from the socio-affective perspective) in relationships, co-existence and harmony within the family. The material aspects of well-being, although they were considered to be necessary, were not the primary interest of the family, in whose view, *It's no good having everything if you haven't got love.*

In the comparison group, material considerations took first place in the

search for well-being. Both fathers and mothers stated:

How can we give our children love if our stomachs are empty? It's no good having love if we haven't got enough to eat. With money we can buy everything the children need, and when we have everything, there is peace in the home. This is well-being for us.

This lack of basic family needs reflects the high level of poverty in the community and the lack of institutional intervention through local development programmes. This situation stands in stark contrast to the CCF group, where the Programme provided solutions to basic family needs in the areas of health and education.

Differences with respect to the use of discipline in the home

In the CCF group it was shown that the child's relationship with other members of the family was horizontal, that is, equally participative. This was a result of interaction on the family level, enabling greater consideration of each other's values and more respect in the home.

In the comparison group, relationships were more authoritative and vertical within the family. The father was the one who made the decisions, with little or no participation from other family members,

least of all from the children, who were not even taken into consideration.

According to these parents:

Punishment is what we use to teach children who's boss at home.

Perceptions of past, present and future opportunities for the enjoyment of well-being

All the mothers stated that when they were girls, their main activity was attending to duties in the house. Very few had the chance to complete school, because this was not important for their parents. Now things have changed a lot, because, as the mothers said,

It is easier for our children to study without travelling long distances. They are

the ones who decide to study or not, and they have all the necessary school materials. They go to school and are properly dressed. There are health centres in the towns. There are roads, transport services, and water is piped to the houses.

At home the children receive more love, understanding and respect, and they have the opportunity to have their opinions and decisions taken into account. In addition, *Working is no longer an obligation, and they only help when they have finished their schoolwork, which is the priority. They have more freedom of expression.*

Similarly, the mothers stated that despite the fact that their children have more opportunities now, there are important things that either no longer exist or are in the process of being lost:

safety, the prevalence of moral values, respect for the elderly, greater availability of food, better harvests, better soil and more abundant fruit crops.

Differences in children's academic abilities

Children in the CCF group had strengthened their capacities and skills for performing schoolwork. This was reflected in a greater understanding of subjects, better skills in artistic expression, better writing and greater self-assurance in expressing their ideas, compared to other schoolchildren.

The investigation highlighted better skills and the capacity to understand subjects



Madres Gu as checking a child's growth and weight. Photo: Courtesy CCFH

like mathematics and Spanish among the children in the CCF group. Even compared to other children in the same school who had not been in the Programme, and compared to the national average, the rates of success in these subjects were higher.

Teachers at the La Naranjita school corroborated this by stating that the children benefiting from the Early Stimulation Programme *come to school better empowered and skilled than those who have not had the chance to participate in the Programme, and this has facilitated their education. They learn more easily, they are more responsible in carrying out their schoolwork, they are more punctual, secure and hygienic and they are more sociable and communicative.*

In contrast, the **comparison group** showed no such advantage. In observing the children at school, it was found that they had greater difficulty, especially with mathematics and Spanish.

According to their teachers, when these children first came to school to enter first grade, *They mainly came with problems with their fine motor skills; they couldn't button their shirts, tie their shoes and much less hold a pencil. They didn't bathe and came with dirty uniforms. They had difficulties socialising because of their lack of vocabulary. They also had serious learning problems.*

As for the way they expressed themselves, the boys and girls in the comparison group were shy and inhibited and were not able to share their ideas with others.

They were not skilled in drawing, writing, making rhymes or singing.

The achievements of the children who had taken part in the Programme were due mainly to the process of early stimulation effectively implemented by mothers who were trained and experienced in undertaking activities of this kind in the major development areas. These tasks were monitored by the Mother Guides and complemented by attendance at the non-formal preschool centre, where the training and stimulation process was continued.

Differences in affective relationships and respect within the family

Based on the observations of 'typical days' and during the fieldwork, the CCF **families** appeared to have closer relationships among family members and neighbours. In the afternoons it was customary for them to go out and talk with their neighbours in front of their homes. And while the adults talked, the children played together. In the evenings, the families would visit one another.

Differences in the children's affection preferences

The children in the CCF **group** cared more for their mothers, whereas those in the **comparison group** preferred their fathers.

This seems to confirm that stronger

bonds were formed with mothers as a result of all the activities carried out together. It is also a consequence of the horizontal relationships established among all members of the family.

In contrast, when the children in the **comparison group** stated that they loved their fathers more, this should not necessarily be understood as an affective preference. It may have more to do with an acceptance of and an attempt to identify with the father as an authority figure. In this group it was the father who made all the decisions in the family.

Both groups of children stated a preference for their older brothers and sisters, as they believed that their older siblings protect them and provide them with security. This is not the case of younger brothers and sisters, who represent a responsibility and a burden, limiting the time they had for doing other things.

Differences in children's behaviour in their family, school and community

The children who had participated in the **Programme** had no difficulty interacting with children of either sex, either in educational or recreational activities. This behaviour was not evident in children in the **comparison group**. The observations carried out in the school showed that children in the comparison group gathered by gender when they were playing or working at school: boys with boys and girls with girls.

In the family, in regard to household duties and responsibilities, the differences between the two groups were more extreme. The **comparison group** girls had well-defined responsibilities within the home, basically involving traditional household chores. The boys took part in agricultural activities, cutting and carrying firewood or taking care of animals.

In the **CCF group**, the differences in household duties between the sexes were less precise – both girls and boys might do housework, without objections or any kind of teasing among themselves.

Differences in skills and abilities

Any inequalities between the skills and abilities of the two groups of children were probably due to differences in the development of fine and gross motor skills.

The life histories of the children in both groups depicted highly significant differences in the attention given to the child from birth until five years of age. During pregnancy and childbirth, the 10 **CCF mothers** were attended at home or in the local health centre by trained midwives. In contrast, the births of eight of the **comparison group** children took place at the Hospital School of Tegucigalpa, which indicates that these mothers were not systematically followed during pregnancy, and that at childbirth, they entrusted themselves to the services provided by the state hospital.

There are regular medical checkups for children up to the age of five in the 'healthy child' programme. Only seven of the children in the **comparison group** were followed by this service, and only two of these continued for the whole programme from birth to five years of age. The remainder only had checkups from six months to three years of age.

This contrasts sharply with the **CCF group**, where all of the children completed the 'healthy child' programme. The difference was seen to be due to the degree of the mothers' empowerment, motivation and awareness with respect to appropriate health and childcare. This heightened awareness was the result of the work done by educators and the parents'

committee, who were responsible for the integration, coordination and implementation of the Early Stimulation Programme. Equally important was the role played by the Mother Guides, who monitored all the activities related to health and early stimulation.

The impact of the project within the community encouraged other mothers to do the exercises even though they were not trained. It is important to underscore the fact that mothers did the child stimulation activities because of suggestions from other mothers as well as in an instinctive way.

The added value of participating in an Early Stimulation Programme was that



Playing with blocks. Photo: Courtesy CCFH

mothers were able to carry out the planned activities in each of the child development areas, doing exercises and activities at the right time for the child, and enabling them to strengthen the skills and abilities in accordance with their age. These factors contributed considerably to differences in the abilities and skills that should be achieved at a certain chronological age. For example, the activities of sitting, crawling and walking differ among the children in both groups. The children in the **CCF group** achieved the first two actions within a timeframe of two months and started walking between nine and 12 months, whereas the children in the comparison group started walking between 12 and 18 months.

Differences in health

Based on information provided by CCF and the La Naranjita Health Centre, the **CCF group** showed a clear improvement in the conditions surrounding the children's health. This was due in part to the efforts of Mother Guides and in part by Programme educators, both in education and in raising awareness.

The results were seen in cleaner homes and in hygiene (water chlorination, rubbish removal, use and cleaning of latrines, handling of animals).

In the **comparison group**, the children tended to fall ill more frequently as a consequence of poor personal health

habits, combined with unhealthy housing conditions. Observations made at these homes indicated that water was not treated before being drunk, animals were allowed to roam around the house, faeces and rubbish were not handled properly, food and cooking utensils were left exposed to the elements, and so on. In short, there was a general lack of concern for basic standards of health and sanitation.

Differences in the children's self-concept

Another important achievement of the **CCF Programme** was the children's ability to internalise a sense of self and self-worth, with greater prospects for the future, giving them clearer objectives, aims and outlooks. This was shown to be evident in children in the **CCF group**. Their life histories show that they had higher personal and professional aspirations.

On the other hand, the **comparison group** had quite another outlook. In view of their living conditions and the relationships formed within the family, being basically vertical in regard to authority and decision making, the behaviour of the children and their mothers was limited and conditioned, with complete acceptance of decisions in which they had no active part. This translated to a sense of impotence in that they were unable to commit to any action without the consent of the father or husband.

In five of the CCF families, there was no father figure. Where there were father figures, their participation in the CCF Programme, and particularly in the Early Stimulation Programme, generated significant changes in the relationships among family members and provided greater scope for decision making.

However, there were significant changes in all the children and families in the CCF group and it can be seen that all actions intended to stimulate children from an early age contribute directly to improvements in the family, community and society itself.

Appendix



Life histories and typical days of selected families

As part of the investigation, the 'life histories' of all the children taking part in the study were recorded and analysed. A selection of these (three from each group) have been included in Chapter Three.

These life histories were compiled from information provided by the mothers, contributions from other people who had had a relationship with the children in question, and the field researcher's observations of the child in the family, the school and community and in a variety of work sessions.

The following pages comprise a selection of 'typical days' that were recorded with the help of the mothers. The aim was to observe the daily routine of the family in a systematic way and take note of all the activities undertaken by the group as a whole. This enabled the researchers to establish the relationships among the members of the family in question.

Presented here are three of these 'typical days' from each of the groups.

Please note that to protect the privacy of the people concerned, all names have been changed.

A typical day – CCF group

Ramirez Family

This 13-member family is headed by Ana, a 66-year-old seamstress, divorced following 22 years of marriage. She currently lives with one of her daughters, Juana (34), a housewife who also sells *golosinas* (snacks) and *nacatamales* (pork-filled tamales). Juana is married, but was abandoned nine years ago, with four children (aged nine to 14, all studying). Ana also has charge of eight other grandchildren (aged eight to 21, all studying), whose mother died.

They live in a tile-roofed adobe house that comprises a kitchen (with a stove and an electric heater) and two bedrooms separated by sheets. They have four beds and two hammocks. The male adults sleep in the house of another of Ana's daughters. The house has a large patio where they breed domestic animals (hens, ducks and two small pigs), a sink, a bath and a washable latrine. It is a hygienic place, with everything clean and neat and tidy. The family is very poor.

The members of the family start their activities at five in the morning, when Juana gets up and has a bath. Then she prepares the coffee for the younger children, who get up at 6:00 to go to school at 6:45. They all wear their full uniform, spotlessly clean, and polished shoes and have their hair combed. They brush their teeth before leaving.

At 7 am, Juana starts to clean the house and she washes the corn and takes it to the mill. Meanwhile, Ana has a bath, drinks coffee and then sees to the sewing she still has to finish.

Three of the older grandchildren get up at seven. They don't have a bath, just brush their teeth, have coffee and do their homework.

At 9 am, Juana starts making breakfast (frijoles, avocado and tortillas). While the grandchildren play ball with their friends, Juana does the washing and finds someone to buy her the food to prepare lunch. At 10 am four children come home for breakfast and then go back to school.

At 10:30, Juana starts to prepare lunch. Meanwhile, her mother has gone out to visit her other daughter and some neighbours. During the morning, several neighbours come to the house to chat with Juana while she continues to do her housework.

At 11 am, the older grandchildren get ready to go to school. Ana is back and irons their uniforms. While the boys polish the shoes, Juana serves them lunch.

At midday, they leave for school, having first been reminded by their mother not to be late home and to avoid problems with their classmates and friends. She also asks them if they have done their homework.

At 12:30 the younger children come back from school and take off their uniforms. One of them washes his uniform and the others hang their uniforms in the wardrobe. After lunch, they go to the library to do their homework. Ana goes out again to visit the neighbours while Juana embroiders and rests in the hammock. At two in the afternoon, she makes coffee and more visitors start to arrive.

An hour later, with no need to be reminded, one of the girls washes and grinds the corn to make the tortillas for supper. At the same time, the children come back from the library and one of them shows his mother the research he has done. They put away their notebooks and go out to play with their friends.

At four in the afternoon, Juana starts to prepare the food for supper (frijoles, avocado and tortillas). At five the older children come home from school and are given their supper. Then they go to see their friends, without consulting their grandmother or saying what time they will be back. After supper Juana cleans the kitchen and goes outside the front door to chat to the neighbours while the children play with their friends.

The younger children go to bed at 8 pm. They do not have a bath, just wash their feet and sleep in the same clothes. Meanwhile, Juana gets their uniforms ready for the next day and goes to bed at nine. The older children go to sleep at 10 pm.

Researcher's remarks:

In this family, there is a predominant atmosphere of respect and all the children are treated alike. Unlike the girls and Juana's two boys, who do the errands, sweep the patios, clean the sink, water the plants and wash their clothes, the nephews do not help with the housework. Now and again, the younger girls receive help from their brothers.

Ana occasionally does some sewing and Juana makes nacatamales or does washing and ironing for the soldiers. One boy receives support from an uncle and has a grant to finish his studies at the military academy.

A week ago there was a tragedy in the Ramirez family. Thirteen-year-old Luisa went out with one of Ana's cousins. On the way back, they were attacked and raped by four thugs. The girls ran along a shortcut and reached a house where they were given help and lent a hammock to bring Luisa to the village because she was bleeding to death. The girl was taken to the nearest doctor in another village and was immediately sent to Tegucigalpa where she underwent surgery.

This is why the family is constantly being visited by neighbours, friends and relations. They give them moral support and ask about Luisa who is still in hospital due to the psychological trauma she suffered. Ana is constantly crying and is very depressed.

Figueroa Family

This family comprises 10 members, the head of the household being Jose (aged 47), a field labourer and builder. His wife is Sandra (aged 44), a housewife who works as domestic help in Tegucigalpa during economic household crises. Sandra is one of the first Mother Guides in the CCF project.

The couple have eight children aged from nine to 27; four live at home and the others, who live in Tegucigalpa, visit their parents on special occasions. This family has limited economic means.

The house where they live is made of adobe (clay) with a concrete floor. It has two bedrooms and a living room, separated by sheets. They have three beds and a hammock. The kitchen is at the back of the house and they have a latrine, a bath and a sink. They have some domestic animals (hens, a cock and a turkey).

The family routine starts at 6 am when the younger boys get up, feed the chickens and the turkey, have a bath and get ready to go to school. They do not have coffee. The girls get up at 6:30 and prepare the coffee for the couple. They do not have baths; they only brush their teeth. They make the beds, clean the division, sweep the patio, polish their shoes and iron their uniforms. Then they go to the school library to finish their homework.

Jose leaves home at 7 am to pick mangoes and plums to sell, returning two hours later. Sandra washes the corn and sends it to the mill. After making the tortillas, she prepares the breakfast (frijoles and tortillas) that one of the girls will take to the younger ones at playtime. The same girl has breakfast and prepares lunch. Meanwhile, Sandra talks to

her husband for a while about the house they are rebuilding on the hill, which was demolished by hurricane Mitch in 1998. They want to make some repairs to the house but have not been able to afford it.

At 10:30 the two girls start to get ready for school. They leave half an hour later, without having had lunch, and call for some friends on the way.

At 11:30 Sandra and Jose chat to some neighbours who come to visit them and then have lunch (rice and chicken). The husband goes out again and Sandra rests in the hammock. The youngest children come home from school at 12:30, put away their backpacks, take off their uniforms and wash them, and their mother serves them lunch.

After a rest the children start to do their homework, helped by their mother. One of the boys is doing a drawing of the community and his father offers to help him. Once the homework is done, the neighbour children arrive to play with them. One of the boys asks permission to go out for an hour and leaves. When he comes back, he plays with his brother and other neighbours who have come to the house. The boy shares with them the stories and puzzles that his CCF sponsor has sent him.

At 3 pm Sandra makes coffee, serves her husband and the visiting children. The boys and girls go out onto the patio to play with the turkey and to chat.

Two of the children ask their mother for permission to go to the river with their friends. Sandra lets them go but cannot help worrying. She goes into the kitchen to prepare supper while Jose goes back to the house they are building.

The girls come home from school at 5:30, take off their uniforms, wash them, help themselves to lunch and then sit outside the front door to chat to their friends and neighbours.

Sandra, her husband and the younger children have supper at 6:30. The boys wash the supper dishes and they all go outside in front where they get together with several neighbours to have a chat while the children play ball. The girls have supper an hour later and go to bed at 8:30.

Researcher's remarks:

They are a very close family who respect each other, providing mutual support and trust. Sandra and her husband talk with their children and they read the Bible together. Sandra is a very protective mother, particularly with the youngest because of a heart

problem he had before he was five years old. Although the boy is fully recovered, the mother is afraid to leave him alone, she is always watching what he is doing. The boy, however, is very sure of himself and acts with self-confidence. He is capable of making decisions; it is clear that he does not do things because others do them or because they ask him to.

Gomez Family

The Gomez family is made up of six members, the head of the household being Gustavo (aged 44) who grows and sells mangoes and plums. His wife is Maria (aged 36), a housewife who makes and sells snacks in the afternoons. This family lives in La Naranjita but is not part of the CCF project.

The family home is a plastered brick house with a tiled front, block wall and gate, asbestos roof and an extensive yard. The house comprises three bedrooms, living room, kitchen and dining room. The family also rents a two-part house with adobe walls, earthen floor and tiled roof, where they have a general store, serving beer and snacks.

Mr and Mrs Gomez have four children whose ages range from 11 to 18. Three of the four children live in Tegucigalpa with a sister of Maria's. Their parents sent them to study in the city because, according to them, the education is better than at La Naranjita High School.

Maria tells us that the couple sleep in separate houses. Gustavo gets up at 4 am, has a bath, then goes off to his land because this is the season for picking and selling mangoes and plums. Maria gets up at five, has a bath, cleans the house and goes to open the general store. She tidies up, cleans the drinks before chilling them, sweeps the patio and cleans the kitchen, and starts to prepare breakfast for her youngest son who gets up at six. The boy has a bath, changes his clothes and goes to the store where his mother has his breakfast ready. He takes money from the drawer; his mother sees him and says nothing. She does not ask how much he has taken, just advises him not to play truant from school.

At 8 am Maria has finished the cleaning. She closes the store, goes back to the other house to do the washing and, after taking another bath, returns to the store at 9:30. She sits near the counter waiting for the customers to arrive. Then she switches on the TV to see a soap opera but only listens because she is attending to the business.

At 11 am she starts to prepare lunch for herself and her son who comes home from school an hour later. He does not greet his mother and she does not ask him how school went. He takes off his uniform, puts away his backpack and asks permission to go out and play with his friends. His mother says just for two hours because he has to do some jobs for his father (cover the mangoes to prevent them from getting damaged).

Maria cleans the kitchen again, waters the patio and the floor in the house and prepares the frozen lollipops and candies. Then she sits down to continue with the same store routine while she receives customers. She has no women friends because she does not trust friendship between women. She says they are 'gossipy and jealous'.

At 6 pm she starts to prepare snacks and the house fills with men friends. She talks to them while she works. They laugh and tell jokes and she looks very happy. Her son comes in for supper and goes off to the other house.

Gustavo returns at 7 pm. He does not greet Maria. When she sees him arrive, she starts to serve his supper. She does not ask how his work went or if he is hungry. He switches on the TV, lies in the hammock and rests while he chats to the customers and friends who have arrived.

From 8 pm onwards Maria sits on the pavement outside the house and chats with several friends while continuing to sell snacks and attend to the store; her husband does not help with this. The couple do not talk to each other unless it is absolutely necessary, rarely exchanging a word.

The child did not speak to his father, he preferred to be alone in the other house or out in the street playing with his friends. When he needs something he asks Maria for it.

At 11 pm Maria closes the store and goes to the other house without saying goodnight to her husband. She has a bath and sits outside for a while. Gustavo goes to bed at this time.

Researcher's remarks:

There is no communication between any of the members of this family. The parents are only interested in themselves, or in making money and making sure the children want for nothing financially. They are financially solvent but a harmonious relationship is lacking in the home.

A typical day – comparison group

Fernandez Family

The family comprises six members: the head of the household, Pedro (aged 32, a farm worker), his wife, Alba (aged 27, a housewife) and their four children aged between one and 10.

They live in an adobe house with an earthen floor, which has two bedrooms, a living/dining room and a kitchen with a Lorena stove (a traditional stove built with clay and sand).

Alba tells us that her day begins at 5 am when she gets up, washes the corn to send it to the mill, lights the fire and starts to prepare the breakfast and make the beds. The eldest son gets up at the same time, washes his face and brushes his teeth, goes to the mill and, when he returns, has breakfast and goes out again to sell meat in the neighbourhood. When he returns, he puts on his uniform and goes off to school at 7:50. The other children get up as the morning goes on. On the day of our visit, Pedro arrived home at 5 am because he had spent all night slaughtering pigs. He had breakfast and went out again to sell the meat.

From 8 am onwards, the mother washes the dishes, sweeps all through the house and waters the floor to keep the dust down. In the bedrooms, the clean clothes are kept separate from the dirty clothes in cardboard boxes and the shoes are arranged in a corner. The rubbish is put in a plastic container for burning later.

At 9 am Alba starts to prepare the food for lunch. She washes the ingredients, preventing the animals from entering the house. While lunch is cooking, she checks the house to see which areas still need cleaning. At 9:30 she takes a break from her daily routine, using the time to change, while the little children spend all morning playing.

At midday, the four-year-old girl has lunch and gets ready to go to preschool. She does not have a bath, just washes her face and puts on her uniform. For her part, Alba has finished cooking lunch and it is time to attend to the youngest girl. The eldest son is back from school and takes his sister to preschool. The other daughter arrives home from school at 12:30, takes off her uniform, changes and puts her uniform in the soiled clothes box. Then the eldest son waters the patio to keep it cool; he sweeps the patio without being told by his mother. At the same time, the father arrives home and Alba serves his lunch.

At 1 pm Pedro sets about mincing some meat for an order while his wife feeds the hens, cooks corn and prepares the rice drink she gives her little girl. Pedro leaves at 2:30 to deliver the meat. Meanwhile, Alba washes the dishes and sweeps the house and the children play with their neighbours.

At three in the afternoon, once the housework is finished, Alba sits down and plays with her little girl. From five to 6:30 she prepares for supper at 7 pm, when all the family chat about their problems and the important events of the day. At 7:30 they go to bed.

Researcher's remarks:

In this family an environment of respect, love and understanding prevails. Affection is fundamental and family life is only limited by their meagre material resources. Everyone helps with the housework. The children obey their mother's instructions more than their father's. They do not have hygienic habits, like washing their hands before eating.

Unlike other houses, they do not have a bath and sink. They wash themselves in the open air and use a washing trough near the street for other washing.



Painting a corn-cob. Photo: Courtesy CCFH

Sanchez Family

This family is made up of four members, the head of the household being Ramon (aged 57), who grows and sells plums. He is a member of the organisation responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure works and the pro-electrification committee. His wife is Claudia (aged 47, a housewife). They have six children, all of whom are married. Three of them live on properties Ramon provided for them and the other three live in Tegucigalpa. The couple share their home with a nephew and niece whom they adopted when their mother died. They are Catholic.

The family income comes largely from the interest the bank pays them on Ramon's savings; also from the income generated by the lands they possess, which are used for growing mangoes and plums.

They live in a plastered adobe house, with a clay tile roof supported by a wooden framework. One part of the floor is mosaic and the other burnt brick. The house comprises kitchen, breakfast room, dining room, living room, two bedrooms, storeroom and gallery. Outside are the bath, toilet, sink and Camilove water tank. For lighting they use a gas lamp.

The family's day begins at 7:30 am when Claudia gets up, prepares the coffee and washes the corn to send to the mill. Her husband gets up at the same time, washes his face, cleans his teeth, has coffee and goes to see his land; the workers are picking the plums and mangoes.

The niece gets up at the same time. She does not tidy herself or have a bath, washing neither face nor hands, nor changing. Claudia serves coffee with bread. The niece, without having a bath, changes to go to school. Claudia spends the morning resting and does not clean the house. During the morning she is visited by her daughters who take her lunch and help her to tidy up. The nephew plays with his cousins at the front of the patio.

Ramon returns at 11 am and his wife serves him lunch. He does not wash his hands. From 1 pm onwards Claudia serves the niece and nephew lunch and looks after her young grandchildren because her daughter-in-law is packing plums. Ramon sits down and rests in the gallery.

At 3 pm members of the Water Board arrive to ask Ramon to accompany them to check the water fountain. They return at 4:30 and he sits down to chat with his wife.

The children stop playing at 5:30. Claudia is resting at the back of the house. At 7:30 she starts to prepare the food for supper and serves it at 8:30. They go to bed at 11.

Researcher's remarks:

They do not treat the water because, according to them, 'It is sufficiently chlorinated at the source and so it is not necessary to do so.' They help their neighbours by giving them firewood. Despite having domestic animals (hens, pigs and a cat), they do not live with them because they have enough land to be able to keep them away from the house. They burn the rubbish outside the house; some of it is used as food for the pigs. Usually they have a bath in the afternoon. After going to the toilet, all family members wash their hands.

Unlike other mothers, Claudia neither washes the clothes nor cleans the house. She waits for her daughters, who live nearby, to help her with the housework, spending her time looking after her feet and her hair.

Garcia Family

The family is made up of six members, the head of the household being Luis (aged 31, a farm worker) and his wife, Teresa (aged 41, a housewife). They have five children aged from six to 19. They live in a cement-plastered adobe house with a concrete floor. It comprises a kitchen with a Lorena stove, a living room and one bedroom.

Teresa tells us that her activities start at 4:30 am because one of her children leaves for the school in another village one hour later. While he has a bath and puts on his uniform, Teresa prepares his food.

Today Luis goes out early to get building materials because he is making alterations to the washing area. His main activity is farming but this is the season for burning the land. Teresa serves the children breakfast while they get ready to go to school. When they have all left, she starts to clean the house.

Once she has finished, she prepares lunch and makes the tortillas. At midday, her husband arrives and the children come home from school. While they take off their uniforms, their mother serves their lunch.

After lunch, Teresa makes plumeria flowers until 3:30, while her husband rests for a couple of hours. When he gets up, he goes to visit friends. In the meantime, the

children finish their homework without their mother having to remind them.

When the children have finished their homework, they help in the house, sweeping the patio and watering the plants, and then go to play with their friends.

When Teresa finishes making the flowers, she starts to prepare the supper. Back home, her husband watches television with the other members of the family (they use a car battery as there is no electricity in the village).

At 7 pm Teresa serves the supper. She washes the dishes herself, cleans the kitchen and sits down to watch television with the rest of the family. They go to bed at 10 pm. All the children sleep in the only bedroom while their parents sleep in the living room.

Researcher's remarks:

They are a close family who respect each other and have good hygiene habits. The mother and the other members of the family take care to keep the house clean and tidy, and the children help.

At weekends, the head of the family sells lottery tickets, together with one of his sons.



Enjoying the Early Stimulation Programme. Photo: Elaine Menotti

Further information

Information about the Foundation, its grantmaking policy and its work, as well as a list of publications are available from the Foundation through the contact details given on the back cover. All our publications can be downloaded from our website.

Titles in the *Following Footsteps* series:

A new door opened: a tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project, Jamaica,
Roli Degazon-Johnson, 2001, Practice & Reflections No. 13

In the web of cultural transition: a tracer study of children in Embu District, Kenya,
Ann Njenga & Margaret Kabiru, 2001, Practice & Reflections No 14

The challenges of change: a tracer study of San Preschool children in Botswana,
Willemien le Roux, February 2002, Practice and Reflections nr. 15

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September 2004, Practice and Reflections nr. 21

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Marta Arango, Glen Nimnicht and Fernando Pe aranda, September 2004, Practice and Reflections nr. 22

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It is no easy task to influence the future of young children. When the children are living in a poor community with few services then all aspects of their lives need to be addressed. Which is what the programme of the Christian Children's Fund in Honduras attempts to do.

This report illustrates the difference a comprehensive programme can make in the lives of the children, their families and even the community as a whole. By studying two villages, one with the programme and one without, this report shows far-reaching effects in many areas.

The programme children felt emotionally secure; they were well-behaved and mixed well with their peers of both sexes; their health was

better than the comparison group children. But above all, the programme children had internalised values and a sense of self – and they had hopes and dreams for the future.

By the age of 10 the children who had been in the programme were performing well in school and were praised by their teachers for their social and communication skills as well as their sense of responsibility. The teachers clearly saw the contrast with classmates who had not been in the programme.

Because the Early Stimulation Programme is part of an overall set of activities, many members of the community are involved. And it is this holistic approach that has convinced the local people that their future will be better.

