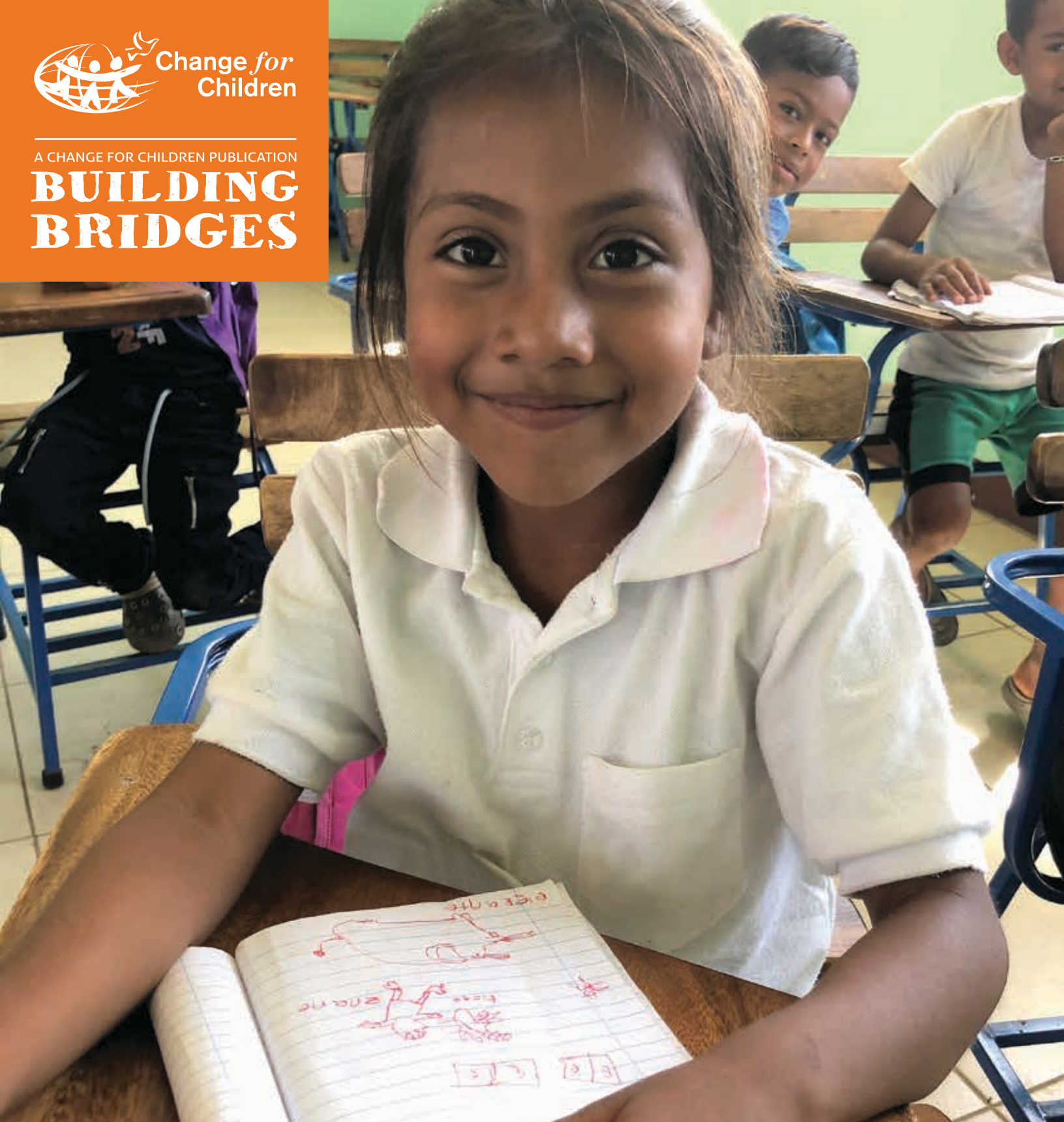


BUILDING BRIDGES



OVERCOMING ADVERSITY THROUGH COMMUNITY
NOW MORE THAN EVER



Community members band together to distribute relief supplies to those most in need along the Coco River

By all accounts, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified global challenges this year. Education is further challenged by school closures. Maintaining hygiene is further challenged by clean water scarcity. Food security is further challenged by economic shut-downs. Over 100 million people have been pushed into poverty so far this year and 1.4 billion+ children have been affected by school closures. The pandemic has hit all human development dimensions hard. The progress we have made in recent decades bringing clean water, quality education, improved nutrition, and gender equality to families in need is at risk.

And if a pandemic were not enough, we saw our project partners in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala deal with the impact of Hurricane Eta, which hit Central America in early November, AND Hurricane Iota, which incredibly followed nearly the same trajectory less than two weeks later, and marked one of the most severe storm seasons on record. Flooded homes, life threatening mudslides, severed communications, and lost crops – it never rains, but it pours!

But in the midst of these challenges, and there are many, we have also seen individuals, families, and communities overcome adversity.

Now more than ever, we see the need to stand together. We see the need for projects that go beyond recovery from COVID19; projects that support infrastructure investment AND prioritize renewable energy; projects that focus on education for students AND include teacher training, indigenous language curriculum and instruction, and gender equality; projects that finance agricultural supports AND support women entrepreneurs; projects that emphasize COVID recovery AND envision a different world as we look toward 2030. **Now more than ever.**

Now more than ever, we see the need to stand together.

Encouraged by positive project outcomes in both Guatemala and BOSAWAS, we are eager to leverage our experience piloting the use of tech-education in remote communities to bridge the digital divide for students and entrepreneurs in other technology-scarce environments.

We have applied to the Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT) for a tech-enabled organic food marketing project with women entrepreneurs in Bolivia. This project would build on Change for Children’s 2011-13 project that involved women farmers growing, cooking, and distributing food for school breakfast programs. This project was a great success and continues to this day.

Approval of our application to Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) would see our BOSAWAS tech-education and Miskito language instruction project scaled to reach more Miskito communities and also Garifuna indigenous communities in Nicaragua and Honduras.

Now, more than ever, we are innovating, adapting, scaling, and overcoming adversity by working to strengthen community. Thank you for being part of our community. We are so grateful for your continued support, **now more than ever.**

Lorraine Swift
Executive Director, Change for Children



Francisca Romero knew her community’s water well was on the verge of collapse. Everybody in Los Ébanos, a 42-family community in Chichigalpa, Nicaragua, was very aware of the water scarcity they were facing. Well past its useful life, the well no longer provided nearly enough water.

Though the municipality was sending in a water tanker to provide families with one barrel at a time, it wasn’t enough. And Francisca, the recently re-elected president of the Los Ébanos Community Water Committee, became committed to overcoming the crisis. Thanks to her tenacious efforts, she advocated for her community with the Water Round Table – an initiative of our *Technology for Sustainable Water Resource Governance* Project whereby the municipality, Change for Children’s project partner (SIMAS), community water committees, and other NGOs working in the area meet to a coordinate and prioritize clean water response in the region. Upon a visit to Los Ébanos, the group joined forces to invest in a complete system.



The new water system, complete with well, water tower and tank, electric pump, distribution pipes, and water meters, included investment from the municipality and the commitment of community members.

The community’s commitment included purchasing the land required for the infrastructure, in addition to a significant investment of sweat equity to prepare the trenching for the network of pipes to each home.

“Despite setbacks along the way, we managed to overcome,” relates Francisca of the families who worked tirelessly from the beginning of the project to the end – culminating in an August 26, 2020 inauguration day celebrated with great joy! “We are grateful for the investments made by all the parties involved. Organizations that, in our community, have not only made an economic contribution, but have also contributed their time spent visiting us and training us for the proper functioning of the system.”

In Los Ébanos, the right to water is achieved through community collaboration.





For what the BOSAWAS biosphere forest reserve in northwest Nicaragua may lack in accessibility and connectivity, it makes up for in sunshine – the source of photosynthesis, Vitamin D, and solar power!

Twenty-four: the number of solar panels that can fit in a single dugout canoe. As the only means of transportation to and from the BOSAWAS communities located along the Rio Coco, people and goods routinely pile into motorized canoes to make the 8-hr journey. During construction of the seven schools that Change for Children has constructed in the region, these vessels have often carried concrete, lumber, nails, and corrugated metal, but this would be a first for a full fleet of solar panels.

It was quite a sight to see the solar panels make their way down the Rio Coco. It was quite a sight to see boys and girls and men and women carrying them overhead,

underarm, and two-by-two up the river bank, across fields, and down narrow paths that lead to the four schools in the four communities participating in the *Technology and Training for Quality and Equality in the BOSAWAS Project*.

It was quite a sight to see the panels hoisted onto tin roofs, connected through a network of wires and cords and pvc pipes and into the power stations atop locally-harvested mahogany desktops in assigned technology classrooms.

It was quite a sight to see the power button on the RACHEL digital library light up and the 15 chromebooks in each school come to life. At the ready.

It was quite a sight to see the enthusiasm, the curiosity, and the wonder as teachers began to navigate the digital library, to explore, and to learn!

Solar power brings light and learning to off-grid communities.



Clear communication is key to understanding in school, in the workplace, in the community, and in a crisis. But what if you don't speak the language of majority? Worse yet, what if you don't understand it? When the World Health Organization began circulating online and print materials for COVID-19 prevention, not every language was available. At least not immediately.

Earlier this year, our BOSAWAS project facilitator, Tony Llorente, translated public service announcements into Miskito, raising awareness about the virus itself and encouraging everyone in the community to implement preventive measures to help stop the spread. The pandemic amplified the need for accessibility of information.

Indigenous peoples account for less than 10% of the global population, but speak over 70% of the world's languages.

To make the resources provided on the RACHEL digital library more accessible to teachers and students who are not proficient in Spanish, Tony and the team of project facilitators have undertaken a massive translation exercise, beginning with Khan Academy content and the teacher training Massive Online Open Course (MOOC).

"Having materials available in Miskito makes teachers and students feel more comfortable and confident with the content since they understand and assimilate the information better in our Mother Tongue," affirms Tony.

"The translated resources have been received with great enthusiasm. The teachers have expressed that this initiative will increase their level of knowledge significantly – and that there's nothing better than acquiring new valuable information in their native language."





Guatemala schools have been closed since March in response to COVID-19. With only a few months left in our Tech Education project and without the ability to congregate, project staff previously tasked with providing in-person teacher support, used the remaining time to resourcefully amplify project impact and finish strong.

Project staff prepared a resource guide for teachers – linking resource materials on the RACHEL to the Guatemala National Curriculum. The resource guide will be shared for inclusion on all RACHELs currently in use in over 300 schools in Guatemala and on new RACHELs deployed in the country.

Though our 18-month project in ten rural schools in Comitancillo has drawn to a close, the mobile learning labs remain in place. The teachers, equipped with the skills and knowledge to leverage the use of the technology and digital library, will continue to creatively engage inquisitive students when schools re-open.



Tech-Education in remote communities is a powerful tool to bridge the digital divide.

“With RACHEL, everyone is having fun while learning, because there are songs, videos and apps to develop reading and math skills. I learned to read through reading on RACHEL and am also to spell the words correctly!”

Grade 6 Student, La Florida

“In sixth grade, what is interesting is the interest and dedication of the students when working with RACHEL. When they realize that it is time to work with RACHEL, they jump for joy because a different environment is presented. When prompted to research a topic, they take the time and start browsing all over RACHEL. Everything is different when using RACHEL, because they enjoy the opportunity to interact with technology.”

Grade 6 Teacher, Cuatro Caminos



When Sindia urges youth in her home-community of Siminka in the BOSAWAS to stay in school, it is fair to say that she herself speaks from experience. When she equips teachers with the know-how to incorporate technology into their classrooms, it is fair to say that she knows its value. When the teachers and students alike look to her for guidance and support, it is fair to say that she has come full-circle.

The sixth of eight siblings in her Miskito indigenous family, Sindia left home at the age of 15. There was no secondary school in the region when she finished primary school fifteen years ago. She travelled to the City, without knowing how to speak Spanish, to seek secondary school education while also working as a care-giver.

With encouragement from kind mentors, she enrolled in post-secondary courses. With hard-earned scholarship support, she attended classes on Saturdays so she

could work for room and board during the week. With a curiosity, she dedicated her time and interest to computers — though she had never before sat before one. With her family’s belief in her, despite poverty, despite distance, despite circumstance, she persevered.

Fifteen years later, young women in Siminka now continue their studies beyond primary school without leaving home. At the local secondary school, constructed in 2018-19, students have recently begun to learn how to use computers. And it is Sindia, now a Change for Children tech-education facilitator, who provides support. It is Sindia’s voice that provides encouragement. It is Sindia’s knowledge that curates curiosity. It is Sindia who believes that the future of the BOSAWAS will benefit as the quality of education increases.

It is Sindia who sees technology in the Bosawas as an opportunity. And it is one she is determined to share as the *Technology and Training for Quality and Equality in the BOSAWAS* project enters its second phase, transitioning from teacher training to student learning.





10808-124 Street, 2nd Floor
Edmonton, AB, Canada
T5M-0H3



#MORETHAN MERRY

Support of our projects means #MoreThan clean water,
#MoreThan education, #MoreThan food security.

It also means empowered communities.

It means women thriving and leading.

It means a more sustainable world.

It means safety for girls at school.

It means healthy families.

It means advocacy.

It means rights.

Now. #Morethan ever.

Make your Merry mean #MoreThan this year!

Change for Children
HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Holiday cards available for purchase in support
of our projects (set of 5 cards \$12).
To order email cfca@changeformchildren.org.



Season's Greetings from our small but mighty office team: Adrienne Wiebe, Nicole Farn, Olivia Krol, Cecily Mills and Lorraine Swift

Thank you volunteers, donors, partners, fundraisers, advocates,
friends and tireless supporters. Your local support means global
change. You are the spirit of Change for Children.

www.changeformchildren.org

CFC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of:



Global Affairs
Canada

