



FIRST PERSON

Teaching about the Constitution

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Photo: FOPRIDEH

Children learn about their constitutional rights through puppets and other interactive methods.

The strongest tool we can give our children is information on their constitutional rights. We received calls from children asking for guidance for themselves and their family after we talked to one school for one morning. If we talked to every school, imagine all the children we could help!

— Oscar Puerto, J.D. Director OFALAM

Tatiana, an 11-year-old in the fifth grade of the Modesto Rodas Elementary School in Tegucigalpa received legal assistance from a USAID-sponsored training module “Promoting Children’s Constitutional Values, Guaranties, and Rights.” Through this training, her eyes were opened as to the sexual abuse she had been a victim of for more than two years and she gained the courage to speak out about it. Only three weeks later, the perpetrator was arrested, she received counseling, and was placed in foster care for the duration of the trial. This is just one of 22 cases of child abuse that came forward as children learned about their constitutional rights. FOPRIDEH, an NGO counterpart to USAID’s Strengthened Rule of Law Program, initiated a pilot training program in public schools in September 2004. They targeted 3,000 children in the fifth and sixth grades in public schools from the poorest and most populated areas of the capital. Coloring books, puppet shows, sing-alongs, flyers, and group discussions all formed part of the training led by a team of experienced lawyers and psychologists. As a result of the program’s achievements, the Ministry of Education, teachers, parents, and children from lower grades, have requested that this information become part of the regular curricula of elementary schools in the capital and gradually expand to all of Honduras. Most importantly, children obtained valuable information that will be useful throughout their lives. They learned what their constitutional rights are and who they can turn to for help when those rights are violated.