



The Rural Children's Education Foundation (FHC)

COOCAFE, a cooperative representing 40 communities in Costa Rica, established FHC in 1996. Given the lack of educational opportunities, families organized and pooled their resources to improve educational options for their children. FHC offers high school and university scholarships and makes grants to elementary schools for supplies and infrastructure.

Community Need

Given the highly developed tourist industry and strong economy in Costa Rica, many believe it to be a country with few problems, but isolated rural areas where coffee is grown suffer from an acute poverty. Schools lack funds and sufficient infrastructure to provide education and many families cannot afford to pay school fees, provide school supplies or mandatory uniforms for their children. As a result, many bright and motivated children are denied access to education beyond elementary school, leaving them trapped in the same cycle of poverty as generations before them.

Coffee Kids and FHC

FHC scholarships are 50 percent grant / 50 percent interest-free loan, which are paid back by students and their family through work at the cooperative. Scholarships cover a portion of costs such as textbooks, school supplies and transportation.

Over the past 2 years, FHC has developed an innovative system to make their Education Project self-sustaining. The organization leverages government loans to provide scholarships and a trust has been established to provide financial guarantees on government loans. The trust will guarantee at least 50 loans annually.

FHC also provided computer equipment to 50 students with help from Coffee Kids. The students will pay back the cost of the equipment plus interest over a 3-year period, which will allow FHC to buy equipment for other students.

2009 Results

- 50 senior high school and college students from 45 communities benefited from the Computers Project.
- 50 university students received government education loans thanks to the financial guarantee arrangement with FHC.
- Scholarship students carried out volunteer activities in their communities and attended workshops on leadership and management during the year.



FHC Scholarship students gather for a photo.