



Interim Report for Together Women Rise January 2024

<u>Organization Name</u>	OYE / Organization for Youth Empowerment
<u>Project Title</u>	Girls Leading Change / Las Niñas Lideran el Cambio
<u>Grant Amount</u>	\$40,000 USD over 2 years
<u>Contact Person</u>	Amanda Hall Coordinator of Development and Partnerships desarrollo@oyehonduras.org

<u>Address</u>	<u>USA</u> 3351 18th St. NW Washington, DC 20010	<u>Honduras</u> Eco-Pasaje Centenario, Local de 2 Plantas 3 Avenida Oeste entre 2 y 3 Calle N El Progreso, Yoro
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Project Description

Our project, *Girls Leading Change*, was designed to equip adolescent girls and young women in Honduras with critical knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and tools to lead healthy, choice-filled lives and advocate for comprehensive sexuality education in their schools and communities. Our specific project objectives include:

- 15 adolescent girls persist in their education, completing the 2022 school year and enrolling in the 2023 school year
- Organized groups of empowered girls and student leaders in six four partner schools are actively engaged in promoting comprehensive sexuality education within their school communities by the end of the 2023 school year
- Short youth-produced documentary that highlights advances and challenges to accessing comprehensive sexuality education and how it impacts the lives of girls and young women presented by March 2024
- Local government allocates public funds to implement policy-related actions during the 2023 and 2024 school years
- 20% increase in the number of 1st to 9th grade students—an estimated 7,300—in our community who have access to comprehensive sexuality education in their schools or communities

Funding Changes

The funding has not changed for this project. In 2024, we will receive funding from the Argosy Foundation for teen pregnancy prevention work in the nearby town of Tela in collaboration with Hands to Honduras. We are currently determining how young women leaders of *Girls Leading Change* may be involved in this work.

Organizational and Program Changes

In the last year, a few key projects have come to a close, including an education-focused project in collaboration with the Tinker Foundation. This particular project cultivated a collaborative synergy by engaging a team of youth facilitators in actions related to both academic support and adolescent pregnancy prevention.

Project Beneficiaries

This year, we trained 160% more girl leaders than we initially anticipated and reached significantly more students at school-based CSE promotional events. We engaged fewer adolescent girls than anticipated as student advocates for CSE in partner schools, but we will strive to make up the difference in 2024.

# of Girls and Women Directly Impacted	Goal for Y1 (2023)	# Reached in Y1 (2023)	% Achieved	# of Boys and Men Directly Impacted in Y1
Girl Leaders	15	24	160%	—
Student Advocates for CSE in Partner Schools	50	28	56%	31
Girl Leaders' Family Members	40	48	120%	15
Students and Community Members at Annual Forum	35	19	54%	3
Students at School-Based CSE Promotional Events	50	163	326%	217
TOTAL	190	283	160%	266

We estimate that we reached approximately 2,000 people indirectly, considering the full student population at four partner schools, family members of student advocates, and people reached in relevant social media posts.



Project Objective Changes

We are concerned about the likelihood for substantial progress in the implementation of the Municipal Policy on Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Through a partnership with a new funder, we will have the opportunity to expand our pregnancy prevention work into the nearby city of Tela and are currently working out how we may link these two initiatives for greater impact.

Project Objective Progress

As previously stated, our overarching goal is to equip adolescent girls and young women in Honduras with critical knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and tools to lead healthy, choice-filled lives and advocate for comprehensive sexuality education in their schools and communities. Over the past year, we have made progress towards our goal in all three focus areas as follows:



Education

15 adolescent girls and young women received scholarships to continue their education. By the end of 2023, two finished ninth grade—the final year of mandatory education in Honduras—, three graduated from high school, and another three completed their first year of college.

Nearly 75% took advantage of complementary support services, including tutoring—mostly in math—, career orientation, and university admissions exam guidance. One adolescent girl benefited from personalized, one-on-one psychological support.

Capacity-Building in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Leadership, and Advocacy

Keyrin—a third-year scholarship student, participant in the last cohort of *Girls Leading Change*, and former president of the Municipal Child and Youth Participation Council—was selected as youth leader for this program.

Through collaborative efforts between our program director, a team of youth leaders, and a couple external facilitators, 24 adolescent girls and young women participated in 40 hours of training.



Topics included: self-esteem, assertive communication, sexual and reproductive anatomy, birth control, sexually transmitted infections, sexual and reproductive rights, gender stereotypes, leadership and teamwork, advocacy, media interviewing, and self-defense. 11 scholarship students participated alongside 13 of their peers.

Eight participating girls—accompanied by program leadership—facilitated an abridged 20-hour training to nearly 60 student leaders in four partner schools, supporting them to emerge as advocates for comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in their schools. With the support from participating girls, teams of student leaders at two partner schools led CSE edutainment activities for nearly 400 same-age peers (7th to 9th grades) and younger peers (3rd to 6th grade) at their respective schools.

Advocacy for Broader Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education

In July, participating girls led an informational session with 13 members of the Municipal Children and Youth Participation Council to improve their understanding of the Municipal Policy on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, a multi-year public policy initiative that was led by OYE and approved by our local city council in July of 2021. They expressed their commitment to join our continued efforts to advocate for its implementation; however, in the next meeting, the proposed activities were aligned with their own interests rather than the strategies outlined in the public policy.



In commemoration of the International Day of the Girl, six participating girls organized a panel entitled “The Situation of Adolescent Pregnancy in El Progreso” for over 20 representatives of the health sector, city council, local schools, and other allied institutions.

They presented local statistics that they collected on adolescent pregnancy and invited a representative of the Honduran Association of Women and Families (AHMYFAMILIA) to share data on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

In preparation for this panel, nine girls participated in a workshop on research techniques led by a current PhD student and founder of educate., a like-minded organization based out of Trinidad, Santa Bárbara in Honduras.

Girl Leader Spotlight: Veronica



Coming from a small community on the outskirts of El Progreso, Veronica, 18, is the oldest of three siblings. Her father works as a mason's helper and neither of her parents went to school beyond 6th grade.

With a whole lot of determination and scholarship support from OYE, she graduated from high school at the top of her class in 2022. This year, she took the university admissions exam and joined *Girls Leading Change*. As part of this cohort of empowered girls and young women, she has left behind her shyness and self-doubt and become a confident young leader and advocate for girls' rights.

In her words: *"OYE is a place filled with opportunities...a place where I have discovered skills and talents that I never thought I had and put my leadership into practice."*

Last month, Veronica stood at the threshold of a significant milestone in her life. She received her university admissions exams results, qualifying for a spot in the school of nursing at the National Autonomous University of Honduras. The continued support of our community—including Together Women Rise—will help her on her path to becoming the capable and compassionate medical professional that Honduras needs.

Challenges

Conflicting Schedules of Girl Participants

Scheduling sessions for the 40-hour training for adolescent girls proved to be a challenge due to conflicting class schedules, extracurricular and family activities. It was an even greater challenge to schedule the abridged student leader training due to differing expectations and limitations at each partner school. Despite challenges, we completed the training with adolescent girls and are making progress with student leaders at four partner schools.

Despite this challenge, we were able to carry out nearly all of our proposed activities this year. This will continue to be a challenge in the coming year; as such, we will seek to plan activities with as much advance notice as possible.

Girls' Involvement as Student Leaders and Advocates for CSE

The involvement of girls in these leadership teams is comparatively lower than that of boys, particularly in sessions held outside of regular class hours. This disparity arises due to their families granting them less permission to engage in extracurricular activities outside of their homes.

The only strategy we have identified to address this challenge is negotiating with schools to allow girls to participate during regular class hours.

Reconciling Different Approaches to Implementation of Municipal Policy on CSE

During meetings with municipal authorities, they consistently express support for the implementation of the policy; however, it has proven to be a challenge to convey the idea that changes to proposed activities are acceptable—and welcome—as long as they are aligned with the policy's fundamental principles and areas of focus, which include the review (and validation) of educational materials and teacher training. Alternatively, they often propose media campaigns, fairs, and other activities that require minimal effort and maximize their visibility among the population.

Recognizing our limited influence over the decisions of municipal authorities, the only strategy we have identified to navigate this challenge involves redirecting our efforts. Rather than focusing solely on advocating for the implementation of the policy, we will channel more efforts towards activities that promote broader access to comprehensive sexuality education in our community and beyond.

Project Timeframe Challenges

We do not anticipate any difficulties in completing our project in the timeframe outlined in our proposal; however, as previously mentioned, we are concerned regarding the potential for substantial progress in the implementation of the Municipal Policy on Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

Budget Summary

	Total Budgeted Funds	Total Funds Spent to Date
Direct Project Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	\$13,500	\$9,219
Scholarships, Training, Advocacy, Monitoring and Evaluation	\$24,500	\$14,460
Indirect Project Expenses		
General and Administrative Expenses	\$2,000	\$2,036
	\$40,000	\$25,715

