



# MY FUTURE IS IN HONDURAS

When analyzing the subject of migration, it is important to consider various economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental variables that cause people to emigrate from their countries. Among these, one pertinent social variable is education. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused in-person classes to be suspended in Honduras, leaving the need for a dynamic, online approach to providing education to young people across the country. Within this context, USAID's Empleado Futuros project partnered with the Ministry of Education to implement online educational programming through the Youth Labor Bridging Program.

This program aims to train more than 3,000 young people in skills that will strengthen their abilities to find employment, pursue technical training, and/or continue to university studies. The Youth Labor Bridging Program offers beneficiaries online courses in the following subjects: Basic Biosafety Standards, Customer service, Life Skills, Basic Labor Competencies, and Socio-Labor Orientation. Thus far, the program has yielded many positive results. Of the over 2,400 young people who have participated in the program, more than 380 have either found employment or returned to their studies. One of the youth beneficiaries, Estefany Sánchez, a 17-year-old girl from Barrio Buenos Aires, Tegucigalpa, was finishing up her last year of her Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance at the Technological Institute of Business Administration (INTAE), when the pandemic hit. Like many others, Estefany had to adapt to the new online learning environment.

*"In this new era of the pandemic, while technology can be a challenge, it has also offered the opportunity to create change and continue to advance in our studies by learning from home,"* says Estefany.

Estefany is not only a beneficiary of Empleado Futuros, but she is also a participant in the U.S. State Department's English Access Microscholarship Program (Access). She is a dedicated student who is committed to her education and personal growth.

In the Empleado Futuros Youth Labor Bridging Program, Estefany took the Basic Biosafety Standards course in which she learned the importance of wearing a mask, proper hand washing, the use of hand sanitizer and social distancing in order to protect herself, her family, and their community. *"Each place has its own brightness. Let's make Honduras shine."*



*Estefany Sanchez obtaining her Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance*

Another young Empleado Futuro's beneficiary who has demonstrated perseverance during the pandemic is Dener Herrera, 22-year-old resident of Colonia San Miguel de Tegucigalpa who, like Estefany, pursued his Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance from INTAE. Dener joined Empleado Futuros as a beneficiary in January 2021 and began learning new job skills that he has already been able to put into practice.

Initially, the situation of the high unemployment in Honduras due to the pandemic affected Dener economically. Dener was unemployed and was considering joining a caravan towards the United States in order to seek better economic opportunities. However, Dener heard about the support that Empleado Futuros offers and decided to join the program. With support and guidance from his Empleado Futuros coach, Dener made the decision to remain in Honduras and work with the project staff to search for temporary jobs. Dener eventually moved to the Department of Ocotepeque, where he works to harvest coffee beans.

Dener stated, *"You have to look to build a life here in the country"*.

Dener has decided that he no longer has plans to migrate, and he plans to continue working in Honduras rather than taking the dangerous trek to the United States. Investing in education plays a key role in the development of a country. Empleado Futuros has prioritized supporting education in Honduras by partnering with the Ministry of Education and working with young people to train them in valuable employability and entrepreneurial skills. These efforts provide youth, like Estefany and Dener, with opportunities to better their lives while remaining in Honduras.