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FIRST PERSON

Helping Kids Start First Grade with Success

USAID's SolucionES project links businesses to community needs to promote social investment.



Photo: Lucia Bonilla, FEPAGE, 2014

“Thanks to SolucionES I’m a better teacher and mother.”

—Yenni Rivas, 31, Day Care Center owner and teacher.

In San Jose Villanueva, a small town in El Salvador, schools are scarce and there are no preschools. Children start first grade without knowing how to write their names, or even know the ABC. But a very strong young woman is determined to change that.

Yenni Rivas Fuentes is a 31-year-old mother of three, born in San Jose Villanueva. Her eldest son is 11. “When he started school I noticed he had trouble learning. I had to do homework with him and I could see he was having a tough time,” Yenni explains. Because of this, she decided to start a day care center with a few toddlers to teach them the basics, so when they reached first grade, they would be prepared. This was the first day care center in the history of San Jose Villanueva. “Unfortunately I didn’t have the background to teach them well, so I decided to go to college and study basic education,” she says.

In 2014 SolucionES, through Glasswing International, partnered with an urban development company called Las Luces, which was building a new housing project in San Jose Villanueva. As part of its social investment partnership with the community, the company decided to help local teachers, mothers, and personnel from the public health system, including Yenni. The company provides training on prenatal care and early stimulation to help prepare children for school.

“The training we receive is very helpful. I can now identify when one of my kids is having a bit more trouble learning and I now have the skills to help them,” Yenni explains. Her success is widely recognized, and she now has 38 children under her care. “I had to hire help to give the children the attention they deserve,” she says.

Yenni’s day care children range from four to six years of age. They learn how to color, develop fine motor functions, get along with other kids, and when they are about to reach age six, Yenni starts teaching them to read and write. “I have seen lots of improvement in them and I have SolucionES and Las Luces company to thank for that. Their training has made me a better teacher and mother.”

Telling Our Story

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