

VANDERMARLIERE VCF

ESCUELA OLIVA GIVES HOPE AND GOOD EDUCATION TO THE YOUNG GENERATION IN NICARAGUA

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HOW CIGARS HELP BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY IN ESTELI, NICARAGUA

With a mix of nutritional and educational strategies, the Escuela Oliva in Esteli, Nicaragua, made admirable progress developing the skillsets of more than 100 local children whose parents work at the nearby cigar factory Tabolisa by Oliva. Each Oliva cigar sold contributes to the program.

In 2020, Oliva Cigars stepped in to support the primary school Escuela Oliva in Esteli, Nicaragua. This enabled access to basic education for more than 100 children of workers at the nearby Tabolisa cigar producing factory, which is owned by Oliva.

BUILDING SKILLS, HOPE & COMMUNITIES

The long term character of the Oliva engagement allowed local educators to carefully think through the program design. In 2021, this resulted in more hours of class, extra teaching materials and a learning assessment tool enhancing early language, mathematics and social-emotional skill development. Offering school lunches and snacks is also part of the program. Nutrition is key to the development of children.

The combination of measurements yielded encouraging learning results. 68 out of 101 initially enrolled pupils successfully completed the 2021 school year. Proof of a growing skill set, but also of emerging self-confidence and rekindled hope for a better future.

Secondary benefits arise from the program which give hope that progress can be sustained. Teachers, children and parents started communicating intensively around teaching methodologies. Special activities, like a promotion ceremony and cultural promotion through dance, also help to root a school community.

ONLY THE BEGINNING

“The results are heartwarming and spur us to strengthen the program”, says Wilmer Jeronimo Lagos, English teacher at the Escuela Oliva. “Additional initiatives focus e.g. on motivating kids to progress to new stages of the educational process. We also have to keep on safeguarding the socio-emotional wellbeing of pupils, especially in times of COVID-19.”

Fred Vandermarliere, CEO of Belgian based VCF, of which Oliva is a subsidiary, is confident the program will grow alongside the factory. *“We’ve upgraded the factory, leading to better working conditions for our staff. Now they can also send their kids to school. We commit to investing in the local community. But it’s also about raising awareness. Every time our customers enjoy a good Oliva cigar, they help this project grow.”*