

Students raise funds to help struggling Honduras

NewsNet Staff Writer - 27 Mar 1999

[E-mail](#) or [Print](#) this story

By JENNIFER JONES

jones@du2.byu.edu

A group of BYU students is organizing a project to establish ongoing financial aid for Hurricane Mitch victims in Honduras.

The students are raising money to set up micro-credit banks in the poverty-stricken nation. Micro-credit loans are as small as \$50 and they are given to local microentrepreneurs who are too poor to qualify for traditional loans.

The group of students, led by professor Warner Woodworth, are calling their project H.E.L.P. Honduras (Helping ELiminate Poverty). At least 40 of the students will go to Honduras this summer, to work with existing NGO's (Non-Government Organizations) to set up the small banks, said Todd Manwaring, founder of Humanitarian Link, a non-profit charity organization.

In October of last year, Hurricane Mitch devastated much of Honduras, killing more than 10,000 people and leaving 1.3 million without homes or jobs, setting the country back by almost 50 years, said Katie Marquardson, a junior majoring in English.

"The evidence so far shows that the damage in Honduras was much more devastating than anyone originally expected," said Warner Woodworth, head of the project and professor in Organizational Leadership and Strategy.

"The problem is that people sent a lot of immediate aid, like food and medicine, but there is still an even greater need for the people to be able to help themselves. That's where micro-enterprising comes in," said Marquardson, 20, from Bellevue, Wash.

People are good at reacting to crises but less involved when it comes to long-term humanitarian aid efforts, Woodworth said.

The nation of Honduras lost all hope of economic stability in the hurricane because they lost the coffee factories and banana plantations, said Lisa Jones, 29, a graduate student in international development and business administration, from Santa Rosa, Calif.

"This is a good way to help the people in Honduras to make their own solutions and pull themselves up. It's not a handout and it maintains their self esteem because they can earn their own living, thanks to the small loans," Manwaring said.

These micro-credit banks will make an ongoing economic difference, Jones said, and improve

conditions for thousands of families. Americans have so much and others have so little, she said.

"There is a great power in the fact that this project embodies the very mission of the LDS Church and our great university," Jones said.

Students are a great resource of energy and a willingness to help, she said. So far the fundraising and donations are going slower than expected and we hope for a greater response from the students and community, Manwaring said.

For information on how to get involved with H.E.L.P. call 361-9810 or visit their Web site at www.help-honduras.org. Check donations can be made payable to Humanitarian Link, 239 West 1920 South, Orem, UT 84058.