



Annual Report 2022

A Note from CREA's Board Chair

Dear CREA community,

This last year has been one of adaptation and innovation for CREA. Knowing that the COVID-19 pandemic has had severe consequences for education around the globe, particularly in underserved communities, CREA focused on filling in the gaps in literacy and learning for all communities we serve. We built upon the expertise and dedication of our incredible staff by providing professional training in high impact, transformational teaching skills to ensure all students can reach their full potential. This has elevated the learning for CREA participants of all ages.

2022 has also been a year for CREA to look inward and take time for deeper reflection. How can CREA identify, understand, and respond to the needs of the communities in which we work? How can CREA continue to build robust programs that bring educational opportunities for the children and youth we serve?

Reflection on these questions was at the heart of CREA's three-year strategic planning process to ensure that access to educational resources is sustainable where we work. This process helped reinforce our commitment to literacy and learning programs in Nicaragua knowing our presence in the communities where we work is valued and needed more than ever.

Our success this year is a testament to our team and the commitment of our supporters and partners. We are celebrating the growth from our humble beginnings operating a tiny lending library in a utility closet, to the successful organization we are today serving over 2,700 participants. Some special accomplishments I would like to share with you are:

- The formalization of the Lila Cunningham Legacy Fund for Literacy and Education as a way to honor Lila Cunningham, one of CREA's founders and create a path for giving in celebration of her legacy along with sustainability for our programming.
- A collaborative strategic planning process using surveys, focus groups, and conversations with all stakeholders to identify, understand, and respond to the needs of our communities. This effort resulted in a new 3-year Strategic Plan which prioritizes reinforcing fundamental learning, deepening all programming, and increasing access for participants.
- Welcoming a new Executive Director, Michelle Chackerian, and new In-Country Operations Director from Nicaragua, Lilly Berrios, to the CREA leadership team.

We are an organization that has navigated changing landscapes and embraced incredible opportunities over the years. We are resilient, wiser, and even more dedicated to our mission of elevating Nicaraguans and their communities through literacy and learning.

Thank you for being a part of the CREA community. I'm so proud of what we've accomplished this last year, and this report illustrates the depth of that accomplishment.

In partnership,
Scott Hagg, Board Chair



VISION

Minds Wide Open

MISSION

Elevating Nicaraguans and their Communities
through Literacy + Learning



Library Services



Academic Success



Youth Development

At its heart, CREA has three core Initiatives that work collaboratively to engage hundreds of children, youth, and their families in rural Nicaraguan communities every day.



Library Services Initiative

Provides young learners and their families access to books and programming designed to teach discrete literacy skills, promote reading proficiency, inspire critical thinking, and foster a joy of reading.

10,640

**BOOKS AVAILABLE AT
THE CREA LIBRARY +
LEARNING CENTER**

208

**CREA MOBILE LIBRARY
VISITS TO REMOTE
COMMUNITIES**

3,589

**CREA BOOKS IN THE
HANDS OF COMMUNITY
MEMBERS**



CREA's Library Services staff immersed children and their families in books at the CREA Library + Learning Center every day. Our Mobile Library brought books and programming to four remote communities each week to engage with everyone from babies in diapers to community elders.

Our Mommy + Me program introduced the concept of reading to young children and to their mothers, many of whom are learning to read themselves. Mothers received books and educational opportunities from CREA Reading Facilitators who explained how to regularly engage their children at home.

CREA Reading Facilitators gathered groups of preschoolers for StoryTime to read and act out early learning books while engaging participants in movement activities and singing, providing knowledge, vocabulary expansion, and of course, lots of fun.



Every primary school student who came to CREA in 2022 engaged in Reading Clubs, where the Library Services team provided direct literacy instruction for all and intervention for those struggling to learn to read. Staff worked individually and with small groups of students each day. Students learned to read at their specific reading level with books designed to improve literacy skills from letter-sound relationships to reading comprehension.



Academic Success Initiative

Provides children and youth with critical, supplemental learning support to finish primary and secondary school.

149

**STUDENTS ENGAGED
IN DAILY
PROGRAMMING AT
THE CREA LIBRARY +
LEARNING CENTER**

317

**ADDITIONAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS SERVED
WEEKLY THROUGH
CREA OUTREACH**

1135

**PARTICIPANTS IN
TOTAL ENGAGED
WITH CREA'S
ACADEMIC SUCCESS
PROGRAMMING**



The CREA Academic Success team provided necessary support at the CREA Library + Learning Center each day and in surrounding communities through weekly outreach for children and adolescents.

Students who receive tutoring through CREA programming are more likely to be engaged in their studies and graduate from school. CREA staff have strong relationships with local schoolteachers and check in regularly regarding students who are struggling and in which subjects; thereby, constantly evaluating students' individual needs and progress to provide the best support possible for success.



Every day, the Outreach Team traveled through swollen rivers and up mountainous roads to outlying primary schools whose students live too far away to make it to the CREA Library + Learning Center. These visits guide even more young people through the joy of learning and, ultimately, toward success in school.

Education Facilitators worked with children and adolescents every day at the CREA Library + Learning Center to build fundamental skills in core subjects.

For secondary school students, CREA offered remedial coursework for those who were failing one or more subjects. This increases the chances that students will graduate in a country where only 17% finish secondary school.



Youth Development Initiative

Supports the academic, social, and emotional growth of adolescents as they strive to reach their goals and create positive change in their communities.

475

INDIVIDUALS
ATTENDED HEALTH
EDUCATION TALKS
GIVEN BY CREA
ADOLESCENTS

12

ADOLESCENTS
CURRENTLY ON CREA
SCHOLARSHIP AT
UNIVERSITY

3

CREA UNIVERSITY
SCHOLARSHIP
GRADUATES



Adolescents at CREA were supported to complete school, pursue higher education, make informed choices, and take action to improve themselves and their communities.

Workshops were designed to empower youth to exercise leadership in their different facets of life, focusing on communication skills, goal setting strategies, overcoming adversity, and role-playing to learn to manage difficult situations.



Through social empowerment projects and electives, youth enrolled in 7th grade through university built and modeled skills in teamwork and leadership.



Participants went to Ometepe Island for their annual retreat. Opportunities to travel are rare and most of these young people had never ventured so far. The retreat provided an opportunity to reflect on personal achievements and set goals for the future. The experience helped prepare them for their next stop in Rivas or Managua, where many hope to attend university.

Community Events

CREA hosted a series of events to engage with the broader community, collaborate with our partners, and provide services in the rural area where we work.

550

**PARTICIPANTS
ATTENDED THE
HEALTH FAIR
HOSTED BY CREA**

300

**PARENTS AND
GUARDIANS
PARTICIPATED IN
CREA FAMILY CLUBS**

26

**STUDENTS
COMPETED IN CHESS
TOURNAMENTS AT
THE CREA LIBRARY +
LEARNING CENTER**



CREA provided early and consistent outreach to families. Facilitation of conversations with parents and teachers through regular CREA hosted Family Clubs allowed staff to engage with families to garner their support for motivating and assisting children and adolescents. In this way, families become more involved in their children's learning which increases the likelihood of success in school. CREA's Health Fair focused on physical, psychological, and emotional health. Families from many communities received services from dentists, psychologists, physicians, and optometrists.



CREA's strong community building deepened our impact and expanded our reach by celebrating special days like International Day of the Book and Teacher's Day with our communities.



Children attended Chess Club and competed in chess tournaments hosted by CREA which are not only fun, but build critical thinking and social skills. CREA participants were recognized by their parents and their community for their accomplishments throughout the year.

Professional Development

Believing education is a pathway out of poverty, CREA promotes professional development for all its employees to strengthen the capacity of our team and set good examples for our participants and the communities we serve.

22

TEACHERS AND STAFF
EMPLOYED AT CREA
FROM THE LOCAL
COMMUNITIES

8

EMPLOYEES RECEIVED
CREA FUNDING TO
PURSUE HIGHER
EDUCATION

64

DAYS OF
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
PROVIDED FOR
STAFF MEMBERS



In response to learning gaps in reading caused by the pandemic, CREA coordinated with two bilingual primary school Spanish literacy specialists to provide in-service training for all staff to learn how to teach discrete reading and comprehension skills. Additionally, in an effort to grow the capacity of our staff to begin to implement financial literacy with participants, a specialist in financial literacy taught skills in this area. Finally, CREA also partnered with TeachUNITED to equip our educators with high-impact strategies to ensure all students can reach their full potential.

THANK YOU

It is through the generosity of donors, our incredible staff, and the time and support of CREA's Board of Directors and Advisory Council, that CREA is so deeply rooted in the communities we serve. CREA's literacy and learning programs are having an incredible impact on the lives of children and youth in rural Nicaragua.



CONNECT WITH US

We'd love to hear from you.

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