



# COFFEE KIDS<sup>®</sup>

GROUNDS FOR HOPE

## FHC Case Study Costa Rica



*FHC Scholarship students gather for a photo.*

### **FHC -The Rural Children's Education Foundation**

Coffee farmers in 40 communities belonging to the Costa Rican cooperative COOCAFE established The Rural Children's Education Foundation (FHC) in 1995 with Coffee Kids' help. Given the lack of educational opportunities for their children, these families organized and pooled their resources to improve educational options for their children. FHC offers scholarships to high school and university students, and also makes grants to elementary schools for supplies and infrastructure.

### **Life in Costa Rica**

Given the highly developed tourist industry and strong economy in Costa Rica, many believe it to be a country with few problems, but the isolated rural areas where coffee is grown suffer from an acute poverty. Schools lack funds and infrastructure. Many families cannot afford to pay school fees, provide school supplies or mandatory uniforms for their children.

As a result, many children are denied access to education beyond elementary school, leaving them trapped in the same cycle of poverty as generations before them.

### **Coffee Kids and FHC**

FHC scholarships are 50% grant, 50% interest-free loan, which are paid back by the student's family through work for the cooperative. Scholarships cover a portion of costs such as textbooks, school supplies and transportation.

The project's long-term goal is to create a network of former scholarship recipients who are well-educated and have a high degree of commitment. Some of the graduates have returned to teach at the local elementary schools where they were once students; others have become agronomists or accountants for their local coffee cooperatives.

Two years ago FHC initiated a sustainability plan for its education project, taking advantage of a recent governmental fund created to sponsor student loans.

### **2008 Results**

- The project currently supports students in 40 communities
- More than 240 schools have received support and over 2,900 scholarships have been awarded since the beginning of the project.
- In 2007, scholarships were awarded to 336 students (217 high-school, 84 university and 35 adult education).
- FHC created a new program designed to leverage the foundation's funds and help university students access government-sponsored student loans.