SUCCESS STORY
Teaching Electricity Energizes Hope in El Salvador

USAID promotes volunteer-led, after-school clubs in ten public schools to create safe and stimulating learning environments. Omar, an electricity volunteer educator, is transforming his community one kid at a time.

Young men and women do not have it easy in El Salvador. High crime rates coupled with low public investment in education create an environment of hopelessness and broken dreams, contributing to school dropout rates and gang recruitment.

This challenging reality might be overwhelming for many, but Omar Sánchez, 25, is in no way discouraged. This volunteer educator spends his Saturday mornings teaching electrical repair in a public school. Omar is one of the 433 volunteers advancing USAID’s Youth and Community Development Program in Central America, since the program launched in 2012.

Omar has the opportunity to teach thanks to the alliance between USAID, Glasswing International and HanesBrands Inc. (HBI), the latter matching USAID’s funds to sponsor more than 88 extracurricular clubs in four Salvadoran public schools, while encouraging and supporting their employees to be volunteer educators. This model is part of Glasswing’s ongoing strategy to create integrated communities.

Omar embodies the true meaning of giving back to the community. Two years ago, he received a scholarship to become an electrician under USAID’s YouthBuilders program in El Salvador. He committed to the one-year training while working full-time at HBI, volunteering, and being the proud father of a six-year old. “It was taxing,” he admits, “but very rewarding!”

“I do feel the need to help others. Maybe because I’m thankful for the opportunity USAID gave me to learn something new. I want others to feel the same way,” he adds. This appreciation is reflected in Omar’s continued commitment to service. He also teaches computer science to elderly people in another USAID-funded program that supports an outreach center in his community.

Omar, who was promoted to trainer at his workplace when his supervisor learned about his skills as an educator and his commitment to teaching, has rapidly become a role model for his students. Says Omar: "I want to show them how much they can achieve if they study and keep away from gangs."