

Central America, Mexico and Caribbean

Ana Luisa, Honduras

Ana Luisa, 16, lives with her mother and siblings in Honduras. She has a 20-year-old brother, an 18-year-old sister, and a younger sister.

Staff from the non-governmental *Project for the Boys and Girls of Honduras* found Ana Luisa in the street when she was twelve-years-old and contacted her family to integrate her into the program.

Ana Luisa explained that she decided to work after her mom and dad had separated. She said it was very sad because every night her mom would cry and ask, "How are we going to pay for food?" Her mom had washed clothes for others, but it was not enough money. Ana Luisa started working when she began first grade. She attended school from 7:00 a.m. - noon. Then, she knocked on doors to collect trash. Afterward, she would return to houses to see if there was anything else she could do, like clean.

Ana Luisa said she did whatever anyone would pay her to do six to seven hours a week (from 1:00-7:00 p.m.) for eight years, (from ages six to fourteen). She never earned less than 30 cents a day. She gave all her money to her mom because, she said, she did not need any. She did not have any regular employers. In general, she said, they were not nice. For instance, sometimes they would slam the door in her face or push her outside. Ana Luisa recognized that she had been exploited. She explained that sometimes employers would tell her to come back the next day for that day's pay, but then they would only pay her for the second day.

Now Ana Luisa is in her fifth year of secondary school and her mom has a stable job, mopping floors and cleaning in government offices. Her older sister helps her mother with her job and goes to night school. She goes to her mom's place of work at 5:00 a.m. to mop the floors, while her mom goes grocery shopping at the market. Her mom buys food each morning to make lunch for her bosses in order to earn extra money. After lunch, her mom washes the dishes and leaves for home in the early afternoon. Fortunately, her mom likes to cook, even though she gets tired. Her mom receives a monthly paycheck, which comes directly to their house and is used to pay their mortgage.

Ana Luisa was happy that her older brother and sister were graduating in 2004. Her brother has done construction work, while studying. However, he hopes to work in business after graduating.



Ana Luisa, 15, Children's World Congress on Child Labor, Florence, Italy, May 10-13, 2004

Ana Luisa volunteers with the *Project for the Boys and Girls* every day after school. She looks for children who use drugs and collect trash. Eventually, Ana Luisa would like to study administration, international business and languages at a university and have a big house so that all her family can live together.

She said that the May 2004 Children's World Congress on Child Labor in Florence, Italy was "the hand of God" and "the first step in letting children voice their opinions."