



BATEY 35

Batey 35 is located about 25 miles north of La Romana and about five miles outside the city of El Seibo. The six classroom building was originally built to serve as an early education facility.

In 1999 it was converted to a high school prep school for the communities in the northern regions of the La Romana Province.

The primary motivation to change the mission of the school was to increase the enrollment of batey students in the high school located in El Seibo.

This strategy is working but it has increased the cost of operating the school by more than 60%. The increased cost are driven by transportation necessary to bring the students from bateyes as far as ten miles away.

Enrollment in the school is only eighty to one hundred students. This is an amazingly small number considering there are more than 30,000 school age children in the bateyes. About half this number have a school close enough to where they live that they could attend.

The enrollment of only 1 student for every 1,000 that started school highlights the gauntlet facing those that are looking to escape the tomb of abject slavery.

Sugar Cane Kids, a social services program administrated through the Good Sam Hospital, is aimed at parents of young children. It works with them to explain the life giving benefits an education will provide their child.

To attend school all students are required to wear a uniform, including shoes. The cost of a uniform creates a hardship for the family, especially when they have several children. The Sugar Cane Kids program provides uniforms when needed as well as caring for the nutrition of students.

The education received in a batey school varies from very poor to poor. In order to keep children in school and to help them develop good study skills, as well as offering them a broader education, the 'ASK', After School Kids, program was introduced several years ago.

Children are sent to the cane fields as soon as possible to bring more money into the family budget, greatly thinning the numbers continuing their studies.

The final obstacle they must overcome is obtaining the proper documentation necessary to enrol in 8th grade. They must produce a 'legal' birth certificate verifying they are a 'Dominican' citizen. These certificates can sometimes become available for a fee of \$600.00, roughly \$24,000 pesos, about the total earned for 30 weeks of labor.