



Marvila Mendez (left) and Mireli Ramirez (right) proudly show off their new CoEd textbooks. February 2009.

## Dreaming Big: Mireli Ramirez and Marvila Mendez Agua Caliente, Huehuetenango

Mireli Ramirez and Marvila Mendez have a lot in common. They are both ninth graders from Agua Caliente, a small, agricultural town in Huehuetenango. They both like to play soccer in their free time, and both help care for their brothers and sisters. But the most important thing they share is big dreams. Both Mireli and Marvila hope to become nurses.

This may seem like a fairly modest goal. However, when the nearest high school is an hour away, and you might have to pass an entrance exam without the benefit of ever having textbooks, this goal is a lofty one. “We never had books,” said Mireli. “In elementary school we had notebooks and a very small library, but that was it. Our teachers used to always dictate to us, and it was really hard. It was very tiring to write it all.”

Marvila quickly adds, “But now that we have books, it is going to be much easier for us to learn.” Marvila and Mireli excitedly clutch their new textbooks. They will soon get the chance to flip through the pages of their science text and see diagrams of the human body and how it works for the first time.

So why do Marvila and Mireli want to become nurses? Because they think it is the best way they can help their family and neighbors in Agua Caliente. In essence, the new textbooks from Cooperative for Education will not only make it possible for these bright young girls to improve their own lives, but will also improve the lives of their entire community.

# Voices

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