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ABSTRACT (100 - 200 WORDS): The focus of this project will be to scrutinize the world of Guatemalan culture, and explore the impact education is currently having as well as the impact it will have in the future. A secondary focus will be placed on what life is like in areas where formal education currently does not exist, and the societal and economic impact it has on those affected. With an emphasis on and explanation of specific current efforts to reform education in the poorer areas of Guatemala, this project will describe education as an agent for breaking the cycle of poverty. This topic is important because we are becoming a more globally-connected society, and the efforts of lifting the poor from poverty is becoming an increasingly interesting and exciting focus of study.
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this project will be to scrutinize the world of Guatemalan culture, and explore the impact education is currently having, as well as the impact it will have in the future. A secondary focus will be to shed light on what life is like in areas where formal education currently does not exist, and the societal and economic impact it has on those affected. With an emphasis on and explanation of specific current efforts to reform education in the poorest areas in Guatemala, this project will describe education as an agent for breaking the cycle of poverty. This topic is important because we are becoming a more globally-aware society, and the efforts of lifting the poor from poverty is becoming an increasingly interesting and exciting focus of study.
Overview

Guatemala is a country in Latin America that is roughly the size of Tennessee. It is bordered by Mexico, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. It achieved its independence from Spain on September 15th, 1821, and set itself up as a constitutional democratic republic. However, there has been civil warfare and political unrest for a vast majority of the time Guatemala has been independent. Finally, in 1996, the government signed a peace agreement ending a 36-year guerilla war “which had left more than 100,000 people dead and had created, by some estimates, some 1 million refugees” (The World Factbook – Guatemala).

With a population of over 13 million, and the median age of both males and females to be just over 19, Guatemala is a growing, young nation (The World Factbook – Guatemala). The economy’s main exports are sugar, coffee and bananas. The peace accord of 1996 has gone a long way in helping Guatemala become more attractive for foreign investors.

Guatemala is plagued with the same problems most Central American countries are: human and drug trafficking, an unskilled and uneducated workforce, and a general lack of governmental motivation to alleviate those issues.
An analysis will be done first addressing the current problem the lack of education is causing in Guatemala, followed by a thorough exploration into five efforts that have/are attempting to change that, and concluding with how these efforts will effect the future of educational reform in Guatemala.
CHAPTER TWO: THE ISSUE

Overview

Education is the most crucial factor to success in society. The benefits of education are often overlooked by those who freely have access to it. Generally, the people who lack the opportunity to receive an education often live in poverty. Specific cases illustrating these challenges will be covered in the sections analyzing the different initiatives being utilized to eradicate this issue; therefore, this section will depict the problematic state of education in Guatemala followed by an explanation of how the lack of education will perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

State of Education in Guatemala

Currently, the literacy rate in Guatemala is just under 70%, meaning that over 30 percent of the inhabitants of Guatemala are illiterate (The World Factbook – Guatemala). This problem is especially more prevalent for women and in the rural, indigenous areas of the country. There are a number of factors contributing to the issue: a lack of interest from the government to support education, a lack of funding for educational programs, a lack of uniformity in curriculum, a lack of training for
educators, and a general ignorance of the most of the population in terms of realizing the impact education will have on them.

The biggest issue is the lack of funding for educational programs. The government should provide a substantial amount of funding for the programs within the country; however, since only a very small portion of the gross domestic product is spent on education, the funding will have to come from somewhere else. Without the money to support the educational reforms, Guatemala has to rely on idealistic people and non-profit organizations for help.

It seems that the educational system will continue to “suffer -as long as they are in the hands of the state- from severe lack of money, less qualified teachers and inadequate and badly-equipped training rooms” (Organisation Esperanza).

The Effect of a Lack of Education

Education in primary schooling teaches the individual how to read, write, and communicate effectively. Generally, the people who lack this crucial instruction early on tend to fall into the spiraling cycle of poverty caused by the lack of education. The lack of educational instruction in the younger years leads to a growing and more damaging ignorance throughout the individual’s lifetime. Without knowing how to read or write, the individual has no means of gathering information about the current issues facing the country, or how they can better themselves. Of course they will likely learn how to speak their native language, but considering the perpetual cycle of poverty and
lack of education is often carried down from generation to generation, this may not provide any direct benefit to the individual in terms of getting out of poverty.

Therefore, “the need to invest in people[‘s] education is critical in order to reduce poverty and advance socioeconomic development” (USAID Guatemala). The only true way to break out of the cycle of poverty, therefore, is through a lifetime of education.
CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFORTS

Overview

There are many things being done (by numerous different organizations and people) to help alleviate this problem. Some are large, governmental organizations, some are non-profit organizations, some are church groups, and some are individuals. This section will highlight, in great detail, some of those efforts, in terms of rational, methodology, and observable results (or proposed results for those currently still taking place). Specifically, the efforts that will be discussed are as follows: the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Improving Girls’ Education in Guatemala project, the Cooperative for Education (CoEd) project, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) 2004 Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion project, UNESCO’s 2006 Literacy for Life project, and Journeys of Hope’s School for the Saints project. The goal of the section is to evaluate these programs in terms of their effectiveness in achieving their objectives, and how it relates to alleviating poverty through the use of education.
USAID Improving Girls’ Education in Guatemala

Introduction

USAID/Guatemala designed the Basic Education Strengthening project to improve the primary education system in Guatemala. During the project’s eight year length (1989-97), a Girls Education Program (GEP) was added to the project in 1991. This changed the purpose of the program, and it was restated as “to institutionalize measures to improve the classroom environment, to improve efficiency in the allocation and use of resources, and to increase the equality of educational policies and practices in Guatemala” (USAID CDIE 1). The goal of this initiative was to create and implement techniques with the idea of helping the spread of education to those who currently were being underserved. Several strategies were attempted to help improve the educational opportunities for indigenous rural girls.

Rationale

In Guatemala, there are more than 500,000 primary school-aged girls who are not enrolled in school. Compare this with the 600,000 who are enrolled, and it becomes apparent that there is a major problem (USAID CDIE 9). The following statistics are presented by USAID CDIE. It is estimated that over 43% of women over 15 are
illiterate. In rural areas only 59% of girls enroll in primary school. Sixty-five percent of the population lives in impoverished areas “where domestic work, traditional gender roles, agricultural labor, and poverty are major reasons for weak demand by families for girls’ education” (USAID CDIE 4). There is an estimated shortage of over 20,000 classrooms.

Clearly, there is work that needs to be done to improve the problems these statistics present. While it would be foolish to assume that the GEP could eradicate all of the problems with education in Guatemala, they had a strong idea for targeting the indigenous girls’ education as being the key to get the process started.

Methodology

Improving girls’ education is a massive task, and USAID took it on using a variety of different programs and initiatives.

Guatemalan Association for Sexual Education

The first major initiative was through the nongovernmental organization (NGO) called the Guatemalan Association for Sexual Education (AGES). The project called for scholarships to be given to girls to “further [their] education, delay childbearing, and reduce fertility” (USAID CDIE 5). The basic plan is for AGES to provide 600 scholarships to girls in 33 different communities each year. The results of the program were promising. The girls receiving the scholarships completed elementary school in a
shorter period of time than those without scholarships. The same evaluation found that “in addition to the scholarship funds, the role of community promoters was crucial in disseminating the importance of girls’ education and in motivating parents to be aware of and support their daughter’s education” (USAID CDIE 5).

Basic Education Strengthening project

With the success of AGES, the next initiative, launched by USAID in July 1989, was the Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) project. The goal of BEST was to “improve the efficiency, coverage, and administration of basic education services in Guatemala [using a] balance of broad systematic improvements with specific classroom support, and institutionalization of project activities into existing organizational units” (USAID CDIE 5). BEST had four components: consolidating and expanding bilingual education, providing support services to classroom teachers, research and development on alternative instructional technologies (including a pilot project that will be later discussed called Nueva Escuela Unitaria), and administrative strengthening of the Ministry of Education. The goals of the project are as follows: “1) a 25 percent improvement in academic achievement; a 32 percent reduction in repetition, from 318 to 215 per 1,000; a 22 percent increase in sixth-grade completion; a 20 percent decrease in years to produce a sixth-grade graduate; a 21 percent reduction in repetition in bilingual schools; a 30 percent increase in promotion for girls in bilingual schools; a 17 percent reduction in national dropout rate, from 82 to 68 per 1,000” (USAID CDIE 5).
The three most crucial activities proposed and implemented during the project were Franja Curricular, Eduque a la Nina, and Nueva Escuela Unitaria.

Franja Curricular

The goal of Franja Curricular was to “integrate gender issues throughout the ministry’s school curriculum and teacher training” (USAID CDIE 7). It called for system-wide interventions that would be completely sustainable and derive major positive impacts on the education reforms. However, for a number of different reasons, Franja Curricular never really got off the ground. Eventually it was dropped from the BEST program. Some of the reasons provided were a lack of funding, a preference toward the Eduque a la Nina program, and a general reluctance of the Education Ministry to support the overall mission of BEST. This is particularly significant because the Franja Curricular component was designed to give the BEST plan sustainability, something it would be hard-pressed to find after dropping it.

Eduque a la Nina

Eduque a la Nina (Educate the Girl) was the largest initiative in the BEST/GEP program. The initiative’s objectives were as follows: “1) provision of scholarships supported by social promoters to sensitize parents to the importance of girls’ education, 2) creation of parents’ committees supported by promoters, 3) provision of gender-sensitive educational materials to teachers” (USAID CDIE 8).
The scholarships given were equivalent to $4.30 per month. According to the girls and their parents, the money was used in different ways, for example, "in addition to purchasing school materials, to buy clothing, food, and medicines" (USAID CDIE 8). As part of the scholarship package, it was possible for the promoters to meet with the parents of the girls who had received the scholarships to discuss the impact of the scholarship with them. They discussed how the girl was performing in school, and generally the parents were very willing to attend the meetings, and felt the scholarships were greatly benefiting their daughter – which they did: "their rates of attendance, promotion, and completion were better than control groups and better than overall national statistics" (USAID CDIE 8).

The promoters were appointed by Fundazucar, a foundation of Guatemalan sugar cane growers. Their role is to collect statistics on the children; to meet with the parents and teachers of the children; and to evaluate the project as a whole. This task proved to be extensive considering each promoters was responsible for six different schools. The small number of schools, the poor Guatemalan transportation infrastructure, and low pay made it extremely difficult for the promoters to be as efficient and effective as they needed to be for the program to operate properly. Sometimes promoters would schedule meetings and not show up to them, and often they just had a general lack of effective communication with the teachers and the parents to have the impact hoped for.

The final intervention objective of Eduque a la Nina was the provision of gender-sensitive educational materials. The GEP team came up with specific teachers' guides and materials to help create a more gender-equal classroom. The materials were
for education on the economic and social benefits for educating girls and self-esteem boosting activities intending to motivate the girls to want to succeed. However, the results show that the guides “offered no direction on how to include girls’ interests, needs, and life stories in daily lessons; how to correct for gender inequities in textbooks; or how to integrate the self-esteem building and other activities with subject matter. Moreover, no grade-specific materials were produced that introduce gender in any systematic way within the primary school curriculum” (USAID CDIE 9-10). There is no doubt that thought behind the materials was beneficial, but the distribution and practicality for using them in the classroom is what limited the success of the objective.

Nueva Escuela Unitaria

Nueva Escuela Unitaria (NEU) was created through BEST, and was based off of a successful model that was implemented in Colombia. NEU is a project that “uses flexible individual and group study and active participation to improve learning” (USAID CDIE 11). The major emphasis of the project was to use the model with the motivational materials generated in GEP’s Eduque a la Nina project to increase classroom participation and decrease gender inequalities for the girls.

In terms of academic success, girls continue to be less than that for boys. Yet, NEU evaluations “confirmed that the use of participatory learning methods in the classroom accompanied by motivational materials in favor of girls’ education increased girls’ classroom participation and their persistence in higher primary grades” (USAID CDIE 11).
Findings

BEST and GEP met none of the goals they had set. A major reason for this was because the Ministry of Education and the government upheld none of their agreements, which severely hampered the potential for a positive outcome. With that said, BEST and GEP did succeed in giving national visibility to the issue of basic education for girls by the projects they initiated. According to the USAID CDIE, though, “the GEP initiatives had several shortcoming marked by 1) an inability to effect substantial system-wide change in the Ministry of Education regarding gender, 2) weak integration and institutionalization of GEP achievement regarding gender-sensitive curriculum and teaching training into the ministry’s plans, 3) uneven investment and performance of the private sector in favor of girls’ education, 4) insufficient efforts to include important voices of civil society in the effort to promote girls’ education, particularly those of women’s and Mayan groups” (USAID CDIE 7).

While each individual program may be seen as underachieving, in terms of increasing visibility and making aware the need for improving girls’ education in Guatemala, USAID should not conclude that it failed. More needs to be done, but as a stepping stone toward education becoming an agent of change in Guatemala, this initiative proved to be worthwhile.
Introduction

Cooperative for Education (CoEd) is 501(c)(3) non-profit located based out of Cincinnati, Ohio with charitable activities in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Established in 1996 by brothers Joe and Jeff Berninger, CoEd cites its mission as being “to help Guatemalan schoolchildren break the cycle of poverty through education” (Cooperative for Education). It plans to accomplish this difficult task by creating and implementing sustainable programs, using deep development, involving the community, and operating like a business.

Rationale

Nine out of ten schools in rural Guatemala lack books. Sixty percent of entry-level jobs in Guatemala require the use of computer skills. One out of ten students in rural Guatemala attends high school. Three out of four rural Guatemalans are illiterate. The teachers are not provided training, and therefore the students have low enthusiasm and motivation, do not know how to properly study, and often drop out.\(^1\) With these statistics in mind, it seems obvious that is room for improvement in the rural areas of Guatemala. The main areas of focus for Cooperative for Education are the indigenous regions of the Central and Western Highlands in Guatemala. These areas are especially

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\(^1\) *Cooperative for Education.* Cooperative for Education, Nd. Web. 22 Oct 2010
poverty stricken. The people that inhabit these regions “suffer from malnutrition (rates of which rank among the worst in the world), poor health outcomes, racism, high rates of illiteracy, and low levels of educational attainment. Together, these factors virtually guarantee that the next generation will be no better off than the last” (Cooperative for Education). That is why the focus of CoEd is the children. The only effective way to break the cycle of poverty is for the children to be educated enough to get a good enough job to make enough money to provide opportunities to get his or her family above the line of poverty. CoEd does this by providing educational opportunities and access to technology to children in middle school.

Methodology

Cooperative for Education (CoEd) provides a plethora of opportunities for the youth of rural Guatemala through many different programs. The programs that will be explored here are: textbooks, computer centers, the Culture of Reading Program, the scholarship program, mini-libraries, and bridges.

Textbooks

As noted, 90% of schools in rural Guatemala lack textbooks. One of the missions of Cooperative for Education is to change that statistic. Without textbooks, the students just copy notes from the chalkboard, which soon leads them to be disenchanted with the whole education process. CoEd’s textbook program has been successfully incorporated into some of the rural schools for the last 13 years. With these textbooks,
some of the results have been an increase in the amount of material covered and learned in class, an improvement of the overall learning experience, and a severe reduction in dropout rates, by as much as 46% (Cooperative for Education). Some of the studies conducted have shown that "simply by staying in school, young people in Guatemala can improve their earning potential by as much as 50% over their lifetimes. With higher wages, they can escape the hardship that has plagued their families for generations—breaking the cycle of poverty, once and for all" (Cooperative for Education).

Textbooks are relatively expensive in Guatemala, so the poor very rarely have access to them. CoEd changes this by providing low-cost books that the students rent, with a sustainable model for replacement. The program works this way: the student "rents" books in four subject areas (math, science, Spanish language, and social studies) for just under $1 per month. Because CoEd purchases the books from a Guatemalan publisher in bulk, it gets the best deal on the books, allowing them to be rented for a low price. Interestingly, because CoEd does, in fact, purchase them from a Guatemalan publisher, CoEd is also helping to stimulate the rural Guatemalan economy as well. The teachers also receive extensive training on how to use the textbooks in their teaching, paid for by the money collected from the students, causing the program to benefit not only the students, but also the teachers as well.

The money that is collected from the participating students is allocated into a fund that is managed by CoEd. At the end of a five-year period after the first set of books are rented, there is enough money in the fund for the books to be replaced—causing the program to be completely self-sustaining. It is important to note that after the program begins to self-sustain, CoEd leaves the project in the hands of the school,
while continuing oversight. This is important because it allows the schools and communities to maintain a vested interest in the program.

**Computer Centers**

Computers are an important piece of rural Guatemalan education because technological employment opportunities are on the rise. With the agriculture sector continuing to decline, the new employment opportunities will be more readily accessible to those with computer skills. Without these technical skills, economic hardship is near inevitable. It is estimated that nearly 80% of all students in middle school and high school, before the arrival of Cooperative for Education, had never had the opportunity to learn how to use a computer (Cooperative for Education).

The computer program works a little differently from the textbook program, although some of it is the same. In this program, the community (with support from CoEd and donors) must first renovate the space that will eventually become the computer center, install lighting, provide security and ensure proper ventilation and airflow. Once that is accomplished, CoEd purchases all of the equipment (generally 16-20 computers per room), and installs it. The curriculum involves around 90 minutes per week of training in Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. The curriculum also calls for 100 lessons, spread out over the three years the student is in middle school, which is created by CoEd with FutureKids Guatemala, an internationally recognized organization with specialties in computer education and training.

Each student pays approximately $1-2 per month to use the computers, which, similar to the textbook program, goes into a revolving fund that is used to replace the
computers or update software them when they become obsolete, and pay for upgrades and the computer teachers’ salaries. After approximately six years, there will be enough money in the fund to replace the computers. This program is extremely beneficial, because through “project-based learning, youths at our project schools learn to work cooperatively, think critically and creatively, and apply their computer knowledge to practical problems facing their communities” (Cooperative for Education).

Culture of Reading Program

The Culture of Reading Program (CORP) attempts to create lasting change in the other participants of the classroom – the teachers. Many teachers in Guatemala have no higher than a high school education, and are therefore not prepared to effectively teach the students to think critically and learn to comprehend as opposed to just memorizing things written on the chalkboard. Without proper teaching, most rural Guatemalans leave school without vital skills, such as how to read a bank statement or a voting ballot, which will perpetuate them in the continual cycle of poverty. The goal of the program is to “deliver training in effective instruction to primary-school teachers and provide them with high-quality children’s books to facilitate reading in the classroom. Better-trained teachers help transform their students into more active learners. With increased reading and writing abilities, indigenous children achieve more in school, continue their education longer, and overcome the challenges and struggles caused by low literacy” (Cooperative for Education).

The program is derived from the Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) program that has been successful throughout much of the developing world. The
teachers receive sixty hours of group training that involves effective reading pedagogy. Each participant is also given about 72 children’s books, which they are expected to use to read aloud in class and implement the CLE program training. The teachers will read the stories aloud, which helps to spark the interest of the students, and then they will ask the students to retell the story in their own words, often using demonstrations and pictures to do so. This really helps to get the students to have a vested interest in learning, because it is engaging.

The CORP has no financial means for becoming sustainable, but becomes sustainable through the education it provides. The teachers who have enrolled and completed the program can help educate other teachers of what they learned, bettering their teaching abilities. The students will go home and share what they learned, which will help the program to reach a higher scope in terms of connecting the children’s education. The effects are of great benefit: “CORP’s simple and straightforward methodology rapidly builds Spanish vocabulary, strengthens reading comprehension, builds confidence and competence working with written language, and makes the learning process more meaningful” (Cooperative for Education).

Scholarship Program

Only 20% of rural Guatemalans attend middle school, and “deficiencies in educational quality, related to poor teacher preparation and insufficient resources, lead the majority of children to drop out before the sixth grade. Extreme poverty exacerbates the situation. Families cannot afford school fees or the opportunity cost of keeping
children in school when those children could work instead” (Cooperative for Education).

The program involves giving seventy indigenous Mayan students from impoverished community of Santiago Sácatepéquez, Guatemala scholarships that cover the full cost of either middle school or high school. United States’ donors help to pay for the costs of the program. The recipients of the scholarships are required to give back to the community by completed ten hours a month of community service.

This will help them gain an education when they would otherwise not have been able to. It will also eventually lead to a better paying job and a better future for their family, but furthermore, “scholarship students give back to their communities through service projects, while also learning valuable leadership, citizenship, and vocational skills” (Cooperative for Education).

Mini-Libraries

Outside of the textbook program, CoEd has determined that in order to be fully effective, the children of Guatemala will need to be continuing their learning outside of the classroom. With that in mind, CoEd has set up mini-libraries in some of elementary and middle schools to promote a life-long habit of learning and reading.

The program promotes literacy in elementary and middle schools in Guatemala “by integrating library resources (including children’s books, novels, maps, educational games, and reference materials) into children’s everyday learning environments” (Cooperative for Education). The program is a little different for the elementary schools and middle schools. In the elementary schools, the mini-library program provides
games, puzzles, storybooks, and school supplies. In the middle schools, the mini-libraries are setup in schools that have already maintained successful textbook programs, and include multiple copies of encyclopedias and reference books, as well as novels from international and domestic authors.

An example to illustrate the effect of the mini-library is La Labor School, which is on the outskirts of Guatemala City, Guatemala. The principal, Sister Kris Schrader, had just seen the installation of the mini-library in her school, after implementing the textbook programs successfully. One day, during recess, she went out to check on her seventh-grade students because there was no laughter and playing going on. What she came to find, was every member of the class, sitting outside, reading for fun! Imagine that scene in a middle school during recess in the United States. Sister Kris was quoted as saying “It’s just amazing to see these kids reading. It’s the first time in their lives that they’ve had books. They're seeing for the first time that there’s a big world out there” (Cooperative for Education).

Bridges

Bridges is the final program that CoEd utilizes. The Bridges Program is the link (bridge) between those in United States and those in Guatemala. The program’s mission is to “increase understanding and knowledge of global challenges and connect people in the U.S. and beyond with friends in Guatemala” (Cooperative for Education). This is done in five different ways: Guatemala service learning trips, educational presentations, school to school partnerships, educational resources, and global partnerships.
The 5-day Guatemala service learning trips are taken three times annually, and collectively involve 25 participants. The trip “incorporates volunteer activities, cultural enrichment programs, and personal interaction with students at program schools” and is mutually beneficial for all involved (Cooperative for Education).

The educational presentations are presented to schools, churches, civic organizations, and individuals and raises awareness “about life in Guatemala, the role of education in poverty reduction, and the ways they can get involved with [the] organization” (Cooperative for Education).

The school to school partnerships are where a school in the United States partners with a sister school in Guatemala. The school in the United States will help to raise money for the school in Guatemala, while the school in Guatemala sends letters and updates about their progress to the school in the United States.

Educational resources are available on the CoEd website with ways for interested persons or donors to get involved in the CoEd mission.

Global partnerships are a way for the CoEd community to get involved with other organizations that are doing the same type of work throughout the world. They will partner with them or share the expertise they have to help garner interest in creating opportunities for all those in need.

Findings

The Cooperative for Education program has been extremely successful. It does an annual review of the programs, so that the results are accurate, transparent, and up to
date. The following statistics were all found on the Cooperative for Education website.

The textbook program's results are as follows:

Of the teachers interviewed: 91% believe their teaching has improved since they received the textbooks. Ninety-seven percent experienced an increase in student comprehension. Eighty-eight percent report that their way of teaching has changed for the better as a result of the program. Eighty percent say student retention has increased. Ninety percent say that student understanding has increased.

Of the students interviewed: 90% consider the Textbook Program helpful in facilitating learning and retention. Seventy-five percent of students interviewed said that they are using what they learned from textbooks in their current studies as high school students.

The Computer Centers program's results are as follows:

Of the students interviewed: 89% of students use their computer lab as a way to improve their future chances of getting a good job. Eighty-eight percent say that taking computer classes has changed their lives for the better. Seven-nine percent say the skills they learn in their CoEd computer courses are useful to their lives. Seventy-one percent intend to study computers at the high school level.

Of the program graduates interviewed: 83% of graduates are taking their computer skills to the next level which means that 83% use their newly acquired computer skills to further their education in vocational high schools or to acquire higher-paying jobs. One hundred percent thought that the computer classes were very helpful or helpful in enabling students to continue their education to the next level and to do homework, research, and presentations.
The Culture of Reading Program are as follows: The reading scores of third-grade students participating in the program improved by 17.5 percentage points over the course of one school year, an improvement more than four times that of a comparison group of non-CORP students. On average, first and second graders in CORP improved their overall reading scores by 28.1 and 17.9 percentage points, respectively.

The Scholarship Program boasts the results of its program of having 100% of all students who graduate middle school because of the program enroll in high school. This is especially staggering considering that the normal rate of high school enrollment is only 14%.

The Mini-libraries provide more than 9,000 children the opportunity to explore learning outside of the classroom and promote literacy.

The Bridges Program has sent more than 500 people to Guatemala, with more than 91% of them stating that the trip has changed the way they look at the world.

Again, all statistics of results are pulled directly from the Cooperative for Education website.

Cooperative for Education seems to be the first entirely successful education initiative in Guatemala. For an area so in need of help (rural Guatemala), the sustainability of the programs, and well as the expertise in implementation is outstanding. Cooperative for Education is well on its way to meet its mission of breaking the cycle of poverty through education.
Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Education for All project has expanded over two decades. The main mission, simply, is to provide funding and agents of change that will bring primary education for all the people in the world. Specifically, the 2004 project looked into education as a way of easing conflict, creating social cohesion and eventually helping a nation to rise up out of poverty together. The assumption of the project “is that for processes of educational change to be meaningful contributions to national reconciliation and peace building in the context of identity-based conflicts, the complex linkages between schooling and conflict need to be explicitly recognized and explored” (Tawil and Harley 6). This section will be a little different from the others in that it looks at education in a way of breaking the cycle of poverty socially, as opposed to financially. Included in this section will be a thorough exploration into the educational reform of Guatemala in 1998, and explanation of “the way educational reform is both reflecting and contributing to shifting conceptualizations of citizenship, national identity, and social cohesion” (Tawil and Harley 92).

Rationale
Education is now considered to be a crucial factor for promoting and affirming cultural and national identity. It is through education that “a peaceful and harmonious coexistence between the people and communities is fostered – a coexistence based on inclusion, tolerance, solidarity, respect, equality, equity, and a mutual enrichment that eliminates all discriminatory manifestations” (Tawil and Harley 19). Essentially, in order for the society of Guatemala to move forward, and eventually break out of the cycle of poverty it currently is in, it will take more than just money. It will take an overcoming of the exclusionary factors of differences in income, gender parity, and rural and indigenous separation from urban and nonindigenous communities through primary education for all, elimination of illiteracy and inclusion through education.

Methodology

The education system is one of the most vital vehicles for the development of cultural values. Therefore, the Ministry of Education is committed to “transform the national education system, making it participatory in compliance with the Peace Accords, in the framework of the process of Education Reform and the Governance Pact, prioritizing the strategies of (1) expanding access, and (2) an improvement in the quality of services” (Tawil and Harley 109).

The proposed way to accomplish this was through the educational reform of 1998. To avoid altering the objectives of the program, as follows are the exact, non-summarized objectives:
to reflect and respond to the characteristics, needs and aspirations of a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic country, respecting, reinforcing and enriching personal identity and the identity of its peoples, as the basis for unity in diversity; to provide a sound technical, scientific and humanistic education, including enhancing performance for productive work, the development of each people, and national development; to contribute to the systematization of the oral tradition of the nation’s culture, as a basis for endogenous strengthening, which will be conducive to their own growth and the achievement of positive and useful exogenous relations; to instill respect and the practice of human rights, solidarity, democratic life and a culture of peace, the responsible use of freedom, and compliance with obligations, overcoming individual interests in the search for the common good; to contribute to the capacity for the critical and creative adoption of knowledge and of indigenous and western science and technology in favor or rescuing and preserving the environment and integral and sustainable development; and to generate and put into practice new educational models which respond to the changing needs of the society and its development model (Tawil and Harley 112).

The objectives set forth in the educational reform of 1998 were to be accomplished by addressing the following seven areas of strategic reform: equity, quality, human resources, multiculturalism and interculturalism, decentralization and modernization, sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation.

**Equity**

Equity refers to ensuring that pre-primary, primary, and basic secondary education is available for all. If the equity commitments are reached, then social, economic, and cultural inequalities can be overcome through the development and transformation of education.
**Quality**

Quality refers to the cultural relevance and curriculum responsiveness in relation to educational demand. If quality is to be reached, it would mean that the teachers are adequately teaching the material, the material is good enough for the students to actually benefit, and the students are learning enough to change the course of their future.

**Human Resources**

Human resources refers to “the improvement of the processes of education, selection, training, updating, evaluation, and remuneration and incentive concerning educational personnel” (Tawil and Harley 114). If human resources reform is successful, then those normally overlooked in the education system (disabled, rural, and indigenous people) will now have more opportunities to succeed.

**Multiculturalism and Interculturalism**

This area of reform’s goal is specifically to change the educational culture of Guatemala. In the past it is been monocultural and monolingual, and the objective and measure of success of this area of reform is to be more inclusive of the other cultures in the country.
Decentralization and Modernization

Similar to the objective above, this strategic area of reform is to develop an educational system that is present in the rural areas as well as the urban areas, and to respond to the local and regional needs in education.

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to government involvement and interest in maintaining the educational reform policies without new external resources. Without a vested interest for development of these principles from local governments, it is likely to only be a temporary solution.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This area of reform refers to “indicators proposed for the execution and implementation of the reform plan and the verification of the achievement of goals” (Tawil and Harley 115). This just means to make a plan to monitor and evaluate the reform to ensure that they stay on track.

Summary
It is the goal of the educational reform of 1998 to meet these specific strategic areas of reform. If met, the program has a much higher chance of permanently changing the Guatemalan education system for the betterment of society.

Findings

The overall findings from UNESCO’s 2004 Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion project is that everything is still a work in progress, although the efforts so far have been successful. The inclusionary system of education in Guatemala is still a new concept, and will take years, if not decades, to become fully developed. The educational system is changing, and this constant, concerted effort to “promote policies and strategies for curricular transformation and the improvement of human resources” (Tawil and Harley 139), is by no means a small task. It would be rash to conclude any of the strategic areas of reform either a success or a failure at this point, considering the infancy of the reforms. Overall, Guatemala “has pinned its hopes on the concept that the education of its children, under a new order of social and cultural relations, will be the principal means to achieve their integral development; that education will be conducted within the cultural, linguistic, and ecological context of the communities, guided by the vision of a civic and intercultural nation that participates in the dynamics of world development” (Tawil and Harley 139). There is still a lot of work to do, including a study of the behavioral relationships between the parents, students, and teachers to
determine and ensure stability of the educational reforms, but for now, the changes are beneficial.

UNESCO 2006 Literacy for All Project

Introduction

The fourth annual *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, produced by an independent team housed at UNESCO, focuses on and explores the global challenge for literacy. Therefore, this section will focus a little more on the idea of literacy as an agent of change in terms of breaking the cycle of poverty. Because literacy is so hard to define and truly measure, much more of this section will be an analysis of why, according to UNESCO’s Literacy for Life project, literacy is so important, along with the long-term benefits it provides for Guatemalan society. According to the project, "literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all ...[and] creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy" (Burnett 5).
Rationale

There are powerful reasons why literacy is at the core of Education for All (EFA). Getting a high-quality education equips students with literacy skills that will be used to benefit them for life. Being a literate individual statistically comes with many perks: “literate parents are more likely to send their children to school; literate people are better able to access continuing education opportunities; and literate societies are better geared to meet pressing development challenges” (Burnett 5). Being illiterate often condemns one to a life of poverty. Those in poverty already have it tough enough, and without the education and skills available to be able to recognize opportunities to better themselves and their families, they are unfortunately destined to a life in poverty. One of the biggest reasons a lack of literacy and poverty together present such a struggle is that it essentially denies that person a voice. Without being able to read a newspaper, a voting ballot, educational materials, or financial materials, the cycle of poverty will be perpetuated.

Literacy, on the other hand, “strengthens the capabilities of individuals, families and communities to access health, educational, political, economic and cultural opportunities and services” (Burnett 30). A blueprint for how to succeed in developing and sustaining literacy involves three crucial steps: proper basic education to teach young children, continuing (or first-time) education for the youths and adults, and establishing an environment where literacy has a recognizable value.
Although all three stages are vital, the most important seems to be the first one. This is because, at that young of an age, the pupil’s mind is still beginning to learn, and that learning helps to dictate and set the precedent for learning throughout his or her lifetime. This is no simple task, however, especially in rural areas of Guatemala where almost 75% of the population is illiterate (Cooperative for Education). In order to successfully implement the first stage of lasting literacy, all the children, boys and girls, need to be in “primary school, ensuring gender parity and equity in initial access to schools, continued enrollment and educational outcomes, and improving the quality of education in these school (both directly and indirectly, through, for instance, EFA goal 1 which enables early childhood care and education programs that enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to entre primary school well prepared)” (Burnett 32-3).

The second stage is the development of youth and adult literacy programs. Many of the youth and adults in Guatemala have already missed their primary chance at literacy through primary schooling. Through the second stage of developing literacy for all, these individuals should receive the training they need to catch up into society. Of course, this may be more difficult than it sounds, considering the lack of depth and scope of the program, but it nonetheless is important.

The final stage is creating (or nurturing) environments in which literacy can thrive. This will typically happen on its own as the individuals educate themselves on how to properly run their lives. Learning to teach their own children and to make educated societal and financial decisions will help create that environment.

An interesting viewpoint that exemplifies the importance of this concept is provided in the study:
literacy is simultaneously an outcome (e.g. reading, writing and numeracy), a process (e.g. taught and learned through formal schooling, non-formal programs or informal networks), and an input (paving the way to: further cognitive skill development; participation in lifelong learning opportunities, including technical and vocational education and training, and continuing education; better education for children; and broader societal developments) (Burnett 34).

Methodology

Literacy versus illiteracy in itself seems a very simple conclusion that is drawn upon by whether the subject can read or write. The issue, however, is that that explanation is no longer sufficient to cover the scope of literacy. Therefore the largest problem with the methodology of the project is that the crucial statistic is difficult to conceptualize clearly and accurately.

The overall goals of the project, amongst others, given within the 2003-2012 United Nations Literacy Decade, are “enabling all learners to attain a mastery level in literacy and life skills; creating sustainable and expandable literate environments; and improving the quality of life [for all involved]” (Burnett 155).

The methods that result in an individual getting only either a distinction of literate or illiterate are now considered to be overly simplistic, and tend to be inaccurate. Some large-scale adult literacy surveys do not even rely on them anymore. The new alternative measures and assessments “seek to demonstrate the value of ‘non-conventional’ approached that: incorporate direct (rather than indirect) assessments of literacy; measure literacy with ordinal or continuous scales (rather than as dichotomies); and/or conceive of literacy as a multidimensional (rather than a uni-dimensional)
It is extremely important to note, however, that although the methodology has seemingly changed, the results and methods still tend to be pretty similar to the ones in the past.

Findings

In terms of specifically what the study found, it seems pretty simple. In general, women are less likely to be literate than men; older people are less likely to be literate than younger people; poor people are less likely to be literate than wealthy people; rural people are less likely to be literate than urban people; and the greatest factor in determining literacy is whether or not a person ever went to school (Burnett 176). Literacy is increasing, though, in every country in the world, not just in Guatemala. The progress has been slow, and will continue to be, but the fact that progress is being made is good.

The benefits received from increasing literacy can be recognized in the human, politically, culturally, socially, and economically. Human benefits carry an intrinsic value, and include greater self-esteem, empowerment, critical thinking and creativity. Political benefits are rooted with literate people being more politically participatory, which can lead to making better decisions, and potentially leading toward a more democratic government. Culture benefits include the option of being able to preserve specific cultural histories through written word, as well as to encourage cultural change. Social benefits are gained from literacy as well, but mainly from continued education. With more education being disseminated, any literate individual will know more about
how to keep his or her health up, more ways to be reproductively healthy and contentious about gender inequalities. Finally, there are obvious economically beneficial opportunities associated with increased literacy, including higher-paying jobs and better financial decision making (Burnett 137-145).

Moving forward, the UNESCO Education for All initiative’s 2006 Literacy for Life project came up with nine steps of action it feels would be necessary to expand the scope and success of its mission, which are as follows:

1) accelerating efforts towards universal primary education and quality in primary education; 2) recommitting to the gender goal; 3) spending more on education and spending [it] more efficiently; 4) making youth and adult literacy a higher priority on national and international agendas; 5) focusing on literate societies, not just on literate individuals; 6) defining government responsibility for youth and adult literacy; 7) doubling [international] aid to basic education to reach $7 billion worldwide; 8) targeting aid to [areas with] the greatest educational needs; and 9) complementing the flow of funds with knowledge and technical support (Burnett 249).

While the work is only just beginning, the project has already illustrated the importance of literacy as an agent for breaking the cycle of poverty. Helping define what needs to be adjusted to be more effective in the future, the Literacy for Life initiative was largely successful.
Introduction

Journeys of Hope (JoH) is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2007 by Diane and Estuardo Dardon (who are husband and wife). The state side operations are based out of Illinois, but the main area of impact is in Retalhuleu, Guatemala, a poverty-stricken, rural area where JoH is registered as a non-governmental organization. Estuardo Dardon was born in Retalhuleu, and his family still lives there today. In order to gather the most information possible, I sat down and conducted a personal interview with Diane and Estuardo Dardon (who I will from hereafter be referring to only by first name). The following is a result of that interview (and all quotations in this section are taken directly from that interview), as well as some first-hand knowledge and experience that I have gathered in the two mission trips I have taken to this very city, to help with the project I will discuss.

When asked how they would describe Journeys of Hope, Estuardo called it “a place that provides opportunities for people to do short term mission work in Guatemala” and Diane added “that also oversees the ministry and development of ministries in the south-pacific coast of Guatemala.”

The creation of JoH has allowed the Dardons’ to truly realize their dream: the vision of beginning to eliminate poverty from part of rural Guatemala using the agent of change of education. This is through the building and developing of La Escuela de los Santos (the School of the Saints), a school that will be used by local Guatemalan children who otherwise would have not received any formal education.
Rationale

What I first wanted to know was why they decided to pursue creating their own non-profit organization considering they both worked full-time jobs. Diane’s response was simply that “there was no other non-profit organization doing what we do – none of them were reaching that part of the country.” Estuardo added “we love the mission field; we feel by having Journeys of Hope [registered as a non-profit, it] will open more doors, not only for us, but for the participants to do unique things” (Dardon).

I next asked the reason behind choosing to focus most of their energy on building the School of the Saints (SoS), Estuardo responded first: “the reason why we decided to build the school is because the only way to overcome poverty is through education. If you teach them something that no one can take away from them, you create opportunities for them to be self-sufficient.” Diane commented as well, citing the reason being “we wanted to do something more significant, instead of just ‘putting Band-Aids on stuff.’ School is so important, it allows people to move from one place to another and to meet the educational need for the children and the community, it’s just a win-win deal.” The idea of creating permanent, sustainable change that does not just give in to the needs of the person without teaching them anything seems to be the most crucial piece to the reasoning behind the School of the Saints project.

To gain a better understanding of what they felt the current issues were, I asked the Dardons what they see as being the biggest problems with the current educational system. Estuardo again responded first, saying “the biggest issue for education in Guatemala, especially in rural areas, is that the government is not putting forward any
effort to get the public school system going, so public school have been shutting down, with more private schools opening.” He feels this issue is so vital because “80% of the people are low-class, and they cannot afford to send the kids to a private school, which leads to more and more kids being uneducated simply because they cannot go to school.” With these issues threatening to perpetuate the current cycle of poverty that those in Retalhuleu are facing, an analysis of the School of the Saints is necessary.

Methodology

When asked how Diane and Estuardo planned to address the aforementioned issues, he said “one of the ways to address this issue is through education. At the School of the Saints, children will not just get an education, but members of the families are being educated in so many different ways.” He said they plan to “use the school as a tool to teach families about nutrition, healthy habits, caring for the environment and parenting,” before Diane added “community development and medical clinics are also significant things they need in order for their lives to be better.”

Estuardo mentioned a unique feature of the curriculum will be to teach the children English, which none of the public schools have the means or knowledge to do. The reason behind this, he says, is that if the kids cannot afford to go to college, they can still use their English to become more marketable, making them eligible for better jobs in the major cities.

The School of the Saints will partially open in January 2011, just in time for the start of the new school year (which runs from January to October). The curriculum
implemented at SoS will include the subjects required by the Guatemalan government, with the addition, however, of music, more advanced sciences and mathematics, art and physical education. The Dardons plan to supplement many of these additional programs by having volunteers from the United States teach the material to the children. An interesting fact about the correlation of the school years from the United States to Guatemala is that when those in the United States are off of school for summer break, it is the middle of the Guatemalan school year. This would allow for many different opportunities to teach to arise.

When SoS opens in January 2011, the school will only be available to those aged for kindergarten through the second grade. This is to allow for the first floor of the school to be utilized while the second floor is being finished. The initial commitment for the first school year is around 50 students. However, it is important to note that they will still be doing tutorials and computer education for the adults and older school-aged children.

The ideal plan is for the expansion of grade-levels to occur on a year-to-year basis, meaning that the second year the school is open, there will be 3rd grade instruction occurring to allow for the 2nd graders from the year before to continue to receive their education. The eventual goal is to have a fully-functional program educating those grades kindergarten through the 6th grade, with technical training for the kids older than the 6th grade.

In terms of staffing, the Dardons are counting on church-wide and synod-wide support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (of which Diane is an ordained minister) to contribute to that. The eventual plan for staffing would include:
one principal – who would also be responsible for administrative duties, one secretary, one individual in charge of security and grounds maintenance, one person responsible for community development initiatives, ten full-time teachers, a program board of directors in Guatemala, and an advisory board of directors in the United States. During the completion of the school, to keep the costs down, there really are only four full-time teachers that will be needed.

Findings

Considering that the School of the Saints has not been in operation yet, the statistical and tangible findings are not yet available. With that said, I asked Estuardo what effects he saw Journeys of Hope (specifically the School of the Saints) having on the education system and the community in the future, to which he responded “once the school is running full-time, we are going to be impacting 300-400 families annually in the Retalhuleu community. ...When the families get educated on living better we are going to provide the tools so they can pass it on to the rest of the community – making them aware that they can use this to better their community and the people around them will help them.”

Diane and Estuardo both believe that the future of education in Guatemala is grim, and that it will get much worse before it will get better. Estuardo reflected on what life was like when he was school-aged: “when I was there, the government was
supposed to provide all of the budget, but because they didn’t, they went to the community and told them to come up with 40-50% of the budget. Some people tried to help, but when they lose their jobs or crops don’t produce well, it isn’t feasible for them.” Diane added, “with the excessive rain and the mudslides, education is already going to the bottom of the totem pole in terms of government recognition.”

They both feel that the Guatemalan government has no interest in putting money into education, which is going to lead to more public schools getting shut down and more children growing up illiterate.

According to both Diane and Estuardo, education should be the number one priority for the Guatemalan government, if they want to see their people rise from poverty. When asked how he would change things, he said “the biggest thing to help would be to have a more accessible school system, to equalize it so not only the rich but also the poor can go to the same school to learn without having to pay large, prohibitive amounts of money. Invest enough time and money to make education free and obligatory so everyone has the same rights.”

While long-term future financial sustainability is not yet predictable for Journeys of Hope, it does have very specific, mission-driven plans that will help generations of people in the Retalhuleu community. Providing the poorest of the poor the opportunity to become educated really does allow Diane and Estuardo to accomplish their dream of using education as an agent of change to break the cycle of poverty by empowering the people, fostering in them the desire to become self-sufficient.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE FUTURE

Introduction

Education has definitely had an impact in Guatemala. There seems to be a strong correlation between the lack of education and the existence of poverty. Generally, the more education a person has, the better off they will live, and the greater chance their children have of doing well, or being upwardly mobile. A comprehensive study has been conducted of five different initiatives that have affected the Guatemalan people, and each of those initiatives have been met with varying degrees of success.

USAID Improving Girls’ Education in Guatemala

This initiative seemed to be overall the least successful. That is the case for a number of different reasons, including potentially the fact that it was the first one attempted of those that were studied. The process of educating the rural areas of Guatemala is a long one, and will hopefully get better over time with each new effort. Therefore, having this effort be unsuccessful, but allowing it to pave the way for more efforts in the future, the overall goal of the Improving Girls’ Education in Guatemala is not lost. One important take away from this project was that all the efforts and focus to
improve attendance and participation of the girls in the schools also had a positive impact on the boys. This is of vital importance because it illustrates that the goal of gender equity, and the efforts to get there, are not detrimental to the boys.

This project relied heavily upon the Ministry of Education and the Guatemalan government to provide financial support, as well as set policies and training to allow for the feasible implementation of all of its plans. This did not happen at all. For a resource-depleted country to begin to break out of the cycle of poverty, it needs support, backing, and guidance from its government – all of which Guatemalans concerned with education did not receive.

Cooperative for Education

This initiative has been extremely successful thus far. This can be attributed to strong planning and a sustainable model. Different from the first initiative, Cooperative for Education does not rely on the Guatemalan government. Instead, it relies on creating sustainable programs that each will deeply affect those involved, creating a vested interest in the success of the project. The textbook program, for example, becomes sustainable in five years, and the computer center program in six.

The success is rooted in needs-based planning. The fact that nine of out ten schools in rural Guatemala don’t have access to books is a big problem. Therefore, CoEd began a textbook program. Having computer skills in Guatemala is a huge step in the right direction in terms of getting a better job, therefore, CoEd set up a computer center program. The teachers were ill-prepared to instruct the students currently,
therefore, CoEd began the CORP project. An explanation like this can be used for each and every initiative Cooperative for Education has designed. This illustrates the idea that each program should be constructed around solving a specific problem plaguing the current Guatemalan educational system.

With the objective of solving the problem out of the way, sustainability and community interest are really the only other things that are required. Cooperative for Education set up the systems to be self-sustaining, which in turn, creates a vested interest from the community because they, essentially, are running the program.

The Cooperative for Education model is one that should be used as a guideline for any education initiative considering its appropriate planning and vast success.

**UNESCO 2004 Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion Project**

The primary reason this initiative is so interesting is because it looks at education in a different light. Generally, when referring to breaking the cycle of poverty, most people would assume that through financial and economic upward mobility, the cycle can be broken. However, the Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion Project examined education as breaking the cycle of poverty through a unified, discrimination-free Guatemalan society where the people work together to attain a greater sense of worth.

While the success or failure of this program is a little more ambiguous to determine, shedding light on the impact of education from a social perspective is crucial in terms of garnering interest from the Ministry of Education and the government. For
initiatives like this to be as successful as they intend to be, the support from the powers that be is necessary. Projects such as these give reason beyond financial and economic gain for why educating the people of Guatemala will be an enormous benefit to the country.

**UNESCO 2006 Literacy for All Project**

This initiative has a goal of global literacy. Obviously this project’s mission will not be attained or completed yet, as it will take at least ten years to see the changes UNESCO is hoping for, however, there has been an increased amount of literacy for almost every country in the world. This suggests that the project is having a quite a bit of success thus far.

What distinguishes this initiative from the others is the focus on literacy as opposed to just schooling. Going to school, clearly, is the most important ingredient for literacy, but literacy goes much further than just primary education. In terms of breaking the cycle of poverty, a commitment to literacy is arguably the most important piece of the puzzle. A child who learns to read and love a children’s book is indeed becoming educated on the principles of learning and literacy, but cannot go so far as to change the world he or she lives in. When literate, though, to the point of being able to read a newspaper, make sound financial decisions, and vote intelligently, this individual now has the ability to break out of the cycle of poverty. Of course if this person did not learn how to read initially, these others steps would have fallen behind, but the central
Idea of this study is to show that the goal for universal primary education will only go so far in helping the people to rise up from poverty.

**Journeys of Hope’s School of the Saints Project**

This, the most current initiative of the five, is important because it is one I have first-hand experience with. I have seen the surrounding community, have physically helped to build the school, build desks, tile and grout floors, and paint. To see the impact a school like this is already having in rural Guatemala in outstanding.

While the school has yet to open, therefore, it has yet to make the impact it will in the future, the idea for it is right on point. The school will provide education for kids who otherwise would not have the opportunity, but also, it will provide education for the parents and community on how to better prepare and treat what is around them. The curriculum will be unique, and different from the public schools currently serving the rural areas of Guatemala, but, most importantly, the mission of the School of the Saints is to break the cycle of poverty for these people using education.

What will make this initiative successful is the non-reliance on the government for complete support. Also, because the parents and community also are involved in the project, there will be a much greater interest from the community, which will help support Journeys of Hope in their mission.
Findings

Through the examination of these five projects, one that, for all intensive purposes, failed, one that has succeeded, one that is in its infant stage, and two that define important aspects of education not traditionally thought of, it can be determined that the impact of education in Guatemala is positive.

Moving forward, in order for the overall goals of education to be met, the government eventually will have to make education a priority. It will be nearly impossible without the support, both financially and politically, of the government for these programs to thrive.

Another important consideration of any new educational plans for Guatemala is that of sustainability. Without a model that is sustainable over a long period of time, the effort will likely only have a temporary impact that will not affect all those it was intended to.

Finally, development is necessary. With Guatemala out of civil conflict, a focus on educating its people is still just beginning. Because of that, there will be a great need to continue to develop programs and initiatives that will benefit more and more of the Guatemalan people. Education not only encompasses primary education for the youth, but also encourages those oppressed to vote, to become educated on recycling, waste management, sexual health, medication and other areas of healthy habits.

It seems, therefore, that the only way for Guatemala to fully become a developed country, it will need to develop its people through education that is sustainable and backed, at least initially, by the government.
It terms of specific recommendations, it seems the most successful thing to do is to continue to create and implement programs that illustrate the importance of education on the maturation and development of the children and young adults of Guatemala. With more programs demonstrating measurable, sustainable results, the government may eventually decide to fund the programs. The issue, though, is getting the government to actually pay attention to education and make it a priority, to which this study finds no current way to do so.

The road out of poverty is long and difficult, but given some of the past and current initiatives, and the conclusions drawn from them, it does seem as though the impact of education as an agent for breaking the cycle of poverty is not only something to consider, but something that is mandatory.
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